FASTING IN RAMADAN

According to the Qur'an and the Authentic Sunnah



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بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

Bismi Allahi Alrrahmani Alrraheemi

In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful

FASTING IN RAMADAN

Obligatory Rules and Benefits as Defined by the Noble Qur'an, the Authentic Sunnah of the Prophet, the Understanding of the Companions and the Four Imams

Compiled by
Dr. Abdul Karim Awad

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Narrated Abu Hurairah (Peace be upon him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"When a person dies, his deeds cease (are stopped) except three (1) Deeds of continuous charity, (2) Written knowledge with which mankind gets benefit, (3) A righteous pious son or Daughter who begs Allah to forgive his/her parents"*. (Muslim)

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

All Praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that exists. The Lord of the universe who gives the best reward to the God-fearing and great loss to the transgressor. We praise Him and seek His help and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah, from the evils of our own selves and from our wicked deeds. Whomsoever has been guided by Allah, none can misguide him, and whomsoever has been misguided by Allah, none can guide him. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone. I further bear witness that Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* is His true Prophet and Messenger, the leader of the Messengers and guide of the Faithful. We put all trust in Allah Alone. Allah is sufficient for us and He is the Best Helper. There is no power to resist evil except through Allah and nor does any strength do good except through Him Alone. May Allah bestow His peace and blessings on the final Prophet Muhammad, upon his pure and good family, and upon all of his noble companions and those who follow his footsteps until the Day of Judgement. Allah the Most High said:

> *'O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah, fear Him, and speak (always) the truth. "He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins. Moreover, whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger he has indeed achieved a great achievement'*. (Surat Al-Ahzab:Verses 70-71)

Know, (May Allah Bless you):
That the most truthful speech is that of Allah's Book (The Qur'an) and that the best of guidance is that of Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him).* The worst of evils are innovations and every innovated matter (in religion) is a Bid'ah (innovation), and every Bid'ah is a misguidance, and every means of misguidance is in the Hell-Fire.

The realisation of the fact that whatever good a person has, particularly in moral and spiritual life, he must spread to others, inspired me to write about Ramadan the month of fasting which is the third 'pillar' or religious obligation of Islam. Ramadan is a special month of the year for over one billion Muslims throughout the world. It is a time for inner reflection, devotion to the Creator, and self-control. It is also a time of intensive worship, reading of the Qur'an, giving charity, purifying one's behaviour, and doing good deeds. For Muslims, Ramadan is a way of experiencing hunger and developing sympathy for the less fortunate, and learning thankfulness and appreciation for all of Allah's bounties. Muslims think of it as a kind of tune-up for their physical and spiritual lives. For with it come two of the greatest gifts of Allah, namely fasting the month and the celebration of Eid-ul-Fitr. Consequently, **Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr** is an in-depth review of the essential obligations, rules and laws on the Fiqh of fasting designed to provide the reader with explanation for both spiritual and physical significance and uniqueness of this remarkable act of worship. Essential subjects related to Eid-ul-Fitr are also discussed briefly and concisely in order to explain the central manners of celebrating the Eid from an Islamic perspective and to illustrate basic principles regarding Zakat-ul-Fitr (Alms-giving).

The contents of the book have been supported by proofs from the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah (Legal ways) of the Prophet Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and other reliable sources issued by the renowned Muslim Imams and scholars. A number of religious issues were selected that concern Muslims in the West and elsewhere. My intention is to benefit and help them understand the real concepts of fasting and manners of celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr so that they can apply them, there by their relationship with the Creator (Allah) can be raised to a higher level of consciousness. It is also a recommendation of the Truth, which may assist mankind to see the fact and stand by it, unshaken despite all the storm and stress of outer life. Allah the Most High said:

> *'By Al-'Asr (the time). 1 Verily! Man is in loss, 2. Except those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience'. 3* (Surat Al-Asr)

We have to be grateful to Allah the Most High for giving us the chance to enjoy another blessed month of Ramadan. It is indeed the month of mercy, blessing and divine bounty in which the reward of good deeds are multiplied. I ask Allah the Most High by His names and Attributes to accept this work and make it a benefit for those who read it and to reward all those who participate in the distribution of this book.

Ramadan the Fasting Month

2. Ramadan the Fasting Month

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. It is during this month that Muslims observe the Fast of Ramadan. Lasting for the entire month, Muslims fast during the daylight hours and in the evening eat small meals. Ramadan is considered as an honourable guest. A guest that visits us once a year and brings with it all sorts of goodness and happiness. A guest that brings with it the wide Mercy and Forgiveness of Allah. A guest that takes the believer closer to Allah and away from the devil and Hell Fire. We are advised in our merciful religion of Islam to be kind and generous towards the guest, so what if the guest is the best of guests over the year?. It is from the immense mercy of Allah upon His slaves that He made them Muslims and believers and that He extended their lives till they reached Ramadan. It is reported that the companions of the Prophet *Muhammad: (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to pray to Allah during the six months before Ramadan to extend their lives so that they can fast Ramadan, and in the 6 months after Ramadan they would ask Allah to accept their fasting of Ramadan. Therefore, we have to be thankful to Allah that He allowed us to witness this Ramadan, so let us please Him during this month. Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to give glad tidings to his companions of the approach of the month of Ramadan. He would inform them of it being a month, in which the gates of mercy and the gates of paradise are opened, the gates of Hell Fire are locked and the devils are chained. This huge blessing is detailed beautifully in this hadeeth, where the Prophet

(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) said:

> *"When it is the first night of the month of Ramadan the evil devils are chained. The gates of fire are locked – not a single gate is opened, and the gates of Paradise are opened -not a single gate is locked, and a caller calls out: O seeker of good come forward, and O seeker of evil withhold, and there are many whom Allah frees from the Fire – and that is every night".* (Tirmidhee, Ibn Majah and Ibn Khuzaymah)

Ramadan is the month of goodness and blessing during which Muslims become more inclined towards the worship of Allah. They pay greater attention to the recitation of the Qur'an, remembrance of Allah and seeking pardon for sins. Ramadan is distinguished from other months due to its many virtues. Amongst them is that:

During the blessed month of Ramadan, Allah the Mighty sent down the Qur'an as a guide for people and a cure for the believers. Allah the Most High said:

'The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong)'. (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 185)

The month of Ramadan is also distinguished by **Lailatul Qadr** (The Night of Decree). It is the most excellent night of the whole year. In this blessed night, the Mighty Qur'an was sent down. This night is a blessed night and as regards its excellence it is better than a thousand months. Allah the Most High said:

'Verily! We have sent it (the Qur'an) down in Lailatul Qadr (The Night of Decree). And what will make you know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months...'. (Al-Qadr, Verses: 1-3)

The significance of the month of Ramadan has also been made evident in many authentic sayings of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. Narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"The blessed month has come to you. Allah has made fasting obligatory upon you. During it the doors of Heaven are opened, the doors of Hell are closed and the devils are put under chains. There is a night during this month, which is better than a thou sand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived of something great". (Ahmed)

This blessed night is said to occur during the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan. Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

"Allah's Messenger used to practice I'tikaf in the last ten nights and say: 'Seek out Lailatul Qadr in the odd nights of the last ten of Ramadan". (Bukhari and Muslim).

In this month, the doors of mercy, forgiveness and kindness are specially opened and the doors of punishments are closed. Narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"When the month of Ramadan arrives, the doors of Heaven are opened, the doors of Hell are closed and the devils are put under chains and according to another narration: the doors of mercy are opened" (Bukhari and Muslim)

It has also been narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Whoever observes (fasts) during the month of Ramadan out of sincere Faith, and hoping to attain Allah's Rewards, then all his past sins will be for given"*. (Al-Bukhari).

It is a time of worship and contemplation. A time to strengthen family and community ties. Therefore, it is recommended that every Muslim should be prepared to receive this blessed month fasting, standing in prayer, spending the nights in worship with sincere faith and hoping for Allah's reward.

3. The Evidence of Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic Calendar, which is based on the moon (Lunar). The Lunar calendar months are made of 29 or 30 days. Ramadan is therefore either 29 days or 30 days. Ramadan is certain in one of the following cases:

1. When Shaban (the 8th month of the Islamic calendar) completes thirty days.

It has been reported that reported that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Fast (Muslims) when you see the crescent. If it is obscure to you, then complete thirty days in the count of Sha`ban.* (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* took great care to determine precisely the beginning of Shaban, because one can then count twenty-nine days and watch for the crescent of Ramadan or complete thirty days before starting to fast. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her):

> *"The Messenger (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) used to be more concerned about determining the beginning of Shaban than about other months. Then he used to fast at the sighting of the crescent*

of Ramadan. If it were obscure, he would count thirty days of Shaban and then fast". (Abu Dawud and Ahmad)

2. Sighting of the crescent:

Allah the Most High has set crescent sighting as the only means for determining dates of various Islamic occasions such as Ramadan, Eids and Hajj. He said:

'They ask you (O Muhammad) about the new moons. Say: These are signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind and for the Hajj (pilgrimage)'. (Al-Baqarah,Verse:182)

Regarding Ramadan, He the Most High said:

'So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home), he must observe Saum (fasts) that month....'. (Al-Baqarah,Verse: 185)

Similarly, Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* emphasized that crescent sighting is required in determining the beginning and the end of the month of Ramadan. This is also indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"Observe fasting upon sighting the crescent and break your fast upon sighting it (the new moon). But if it is not possible to sight it, complete the month of thirty days". (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

In addition, it has been agreed that witnesses are needed to establish the Sighting:

- Two trustworthy Muslim witnesses

This is indicated in the saying of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*:

> *"If two just Muslim witnesses testify [that they saw it] then fast or break your fast".* (Ahmad, an-Nassa'i and ad-Daraqutni)

- One reliable and trustworthy Muslim witness can be accepted

This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him):

> *"People were looking out for the crescent of Ramadan. I informed the Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) that I saw it. So he fasted on the following day and ordered people to fast".* (Abu Dawud)

The above discussion highlights a general command to all Muslims to abide by crescent sighting of two or one trustworthy Muslims. Anyone who rejects this would indeed disregard the consent of the Muslim scholars and would be attempting to spoil the beauty and simplicity of this religion, and, worst of all, would be directly and openly disobeying Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. As long as the witnesses are apparently acceptable and trustworthy Muslims then we must follow their testimony and fast (or end the fasting).

It is recommended that whoever sights the crescent (Hilal) of Ramadan, or any other month for that matter, or being informed about new crescent, should say: "Allah is Greatest. O

Allah, make it the beginning, the beginning of prosperity, faith, peace, and total submission to Allah. Your Lord and mine is Allah".

4. Characteristics of Fasting

Fasting is another unique moral and spiritual characteristic of Islam. The Arabic word 'sawm' is used for fasting. The term 'to fast' literary means 'to refrain' i.e. absolute abstention and self-restraint. Al-Qur'an uses the word generally when Mary, the mother of Jesus (Peace be upon them), has been instructed by Allah the Most High to say:

> *'Verily, I have vowed a fast unto the Most Beneficent (Allah) so I shall not speak to any human being this day'.*
> (Maryam, Verse: 26)

According to Shariah (Islamic legislation) fasting means abstention from drinking, eating and restraint of the sexual intercourse and the like, as a form of worship to Allah, being from dawn to sunset. Allah the Most High said:

> *'Eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn. Then strictly observe the fast until nightfall'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 187]

Even though from dawn to sunset, Muslims abstain from food, drink and all sensual pleasures, that doesn't mean food or sexual relations are entirely out of the picture. Two main meals are taken each day during Ramadan. The Suhoor (pre-dawn meal taken each day) and the Iftar (i.e. main meal taken after sunset). A man can also practise sexual intercourse with his wife during the nights

of Ramadan.

Although the definition indicates restraining the stomach and private parts from whatever nullifies the fast, other body parts such as tongue, eyes, ears, etc are equally obligated to be restrained. The most significant aspect of fasting is the development of Allah-consciousness (Taqwa) in the heart and the soul of a fasting person. One must abstain from immoral behaviour and attitude as well. Refraining from food and such is essential during fast but it is not sufficient. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"He who does not desist from obscene language and acting obscenely (during the period of fasting), Allah has no need that he did not eat or drink."* (Bukhari and Muslim)

So if the faster wants to gain the total rewards of fasting, he/she must for instance, avoid backbiting, slander, and lies; the eyes should avoid looking into things that are considered as unlawful; the ears must stop from listening to conversations, words, songs; that injures the fast and the heart or mind must be restrained from indulging themselves in things that spoil the spirit of fasting.

Note

In sub-Arctic regions of Scandinavia, Northern Canada and Siberia, the winter months bring complete darkness and vice versa during the summer months. We have therefore been informed that in such regions we should calculate the mean (average) annual daylight time and fast accordingly. This dispensation takes effect above a latitude of X 0 N/S. If one is to be observing the fast in Tromso (Northern tip of Norway), it is daylight in June and July even at 12 midnight, hence the name land of midnight sun. In this respect, a mean or average of the 'Day' and the 'Night' has to be made and fasting is observed.

5. The Obligation of Fasting

Fasting in Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is considered as the Muslim's third practical duty to Allah. It was made obligatory in the second year of Hijrah (Migration of the Prophet *'Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him'* to Madinah). It is a universal institution in as much as all the religions of the world and all the great religious personalities adopted fasting as the principal method of controlling and killing passions. Fasting is a commandment and a clear order from Allah upon us and we have no other choice but to obey our Lord 'Allah' and please Him out of Love and Fear at the same time. It is a means by which the true extent of the servant's love for his Lord is revealed and by which the servant can truly exalt him. Fasting is a compulsory act of worship for all Muslims, though there are exceptional circumstances, which exempt people from fasting. The evidence of observing fast as a part of Faith is indicated in Allah's words:

> *'O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious)'*. (Al-Baqarah,Verse: 183)

He also said:

> *'The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights*

(the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home), he must observe Saum (fasts)'.
(Surat Al-Baqarah: Verse 185)

Fasting in Ramadan has also been ordained by the Sunnah of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and the whole Ummah (Muslim nations). According to the Sunnah; Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"Islam is built upon five pillars: To witness that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His prophet; to perform Prayers; to pay Zakah; ***to fast Ramadan*** *and to perform Pilgrimage to Makkah".* (Bukhari and Muslim)

The whole Ummah has agreed that it is obligatory to fast in Ramadan, as it is one of the pillars of Islam and that whoever denies it is a kafir (i.e. a disbeliever), having turned away from Islam.

5.1. Upon whom is Fasting Obligatory?

Fasting is obligatory upon every person who has fulfilled these prerequisites. He or she must be:

5.1.1. A Muslim

The person who observes fast should be a Muslim who witnesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone and witnesses that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger.

5.1.2. Baligh (Puberty or Adulthood)

According to Islam puberty or adulthood is defined when a child reaches the stage of al-bulugh (adulthood), *or* Tamyeez (discretion), which can be designated by three signs:

Discharging semen as a result of wet dreams,
Appearance of hair around the pubic area.
Reaching the age of fifteen:

It has been narrated by Abdullah Bin Umar (may Allah pleased with him) that:"

My parents brought me to Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* in the campaign of Uhud and I was fourteen years old, so the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* did not enlist me in fighting." But a year later in the campaign of Al-Khandaqq, I was fifteen, so this time the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* enlisted me in the battle" (Muslim).

This indicates that the age of 15 is the legal age for a Muslim boy or a girl to be accountable for his or her religious duties as well as worldly affairs.

Girls reach puberty when they experience the above three signs. However, they have a fourth one, that is, menstruation. Whenever a girl experiences it, she reaches the age of bulugh and she becomes Mukalaf (i.e. must practise all religious duties) even if she is 12 years old.

5.1.3. A'qil and At Tamyeez (Sane and Discretion)
A person who observes fast should be mentally fit, which means to be sane and having a sense of discretion

5.1.4. Qadir (Physical fitness)
A person who observes fast should be fairly certain that fasting is unlikely to cause him/her any harm, physical or mental, other than the normal reactions to hunger, thirst, etc.

5.1.5. Muqim (Resident: not in a state of travelling)
A person who observes fast should be present at his/her permanent settlement, for instance home town, one's farm, and one's business premises, etc. This means not to be on a journey. (A traveller may fast if he/she want's to,)

5.2. Upon whom is Fasting inapplicable?
People of the following categories are exempted from the duty of fasting, and no compensation or any other substitute is enjoined on them.

5.2.1. A non-Muslim (Kafir)
Fasting is not obligatory on a non-Muslim even if he/she decides to fast and follows all the regulations, it will not be accepted by Allah the Most High until he/she declares the Shahada (becomes a muslim), and only then will the fast be accepted. If he/she converts to Islam it becomes incumbent upon him/her to fast.

5.2.2. A mad person (the insane)
Insane people who are unaccountable for their deeds are exempted from fasting because they are divested of Aqil (sanity), which is a key element on which religious obligations depend. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) said:

> *"The pen is raised from three: from the madman until he regains consciousness, on the sleeper until he wakes up, and on the child until he has a wet dream."* (Ahmad, Abu Dawood and Tirmidhi).

5.2.3. Children who are not adolescent yet

Children under the age of puberty and discretion are exempted from fasting until he/she dreams (i.e. reaches the age of puberty or discretion), but training children to observe fast is highly recommended. Children should be encouraged to fast part of the day for practice, until they are old enough to fast the whole day like the grown ups. Narrated Rubayyiah Bint Mau'awwidh (may Allah pleased with her), the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* sent a messenger to the village of Ansar on the morning of Ashura to inform them:

> *"Whoever wakes in fasting should continue his fasting, whoever wakes up without fasting should complete his day in fasting. So we used to fast, let our young children fast, and go to the Masjid with them. When one of the children cried for food, we would make toys from wool and give them to the children until it was time to break the fast."* (Bukhari and Muslim)

5.2.4. Women during the period of menstruation or of post childbirth state

Appearance of menstruation (*hayd*), or post-childbirth blood (*nifaas*) invalidates the fast even if such bleeding begins just before sunset (i.e. Iftar) time. Fasting for women during these periods is forbidden and should be made up later, a day for a day. In this context, it has been reported that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: "when a woman experiences her monthly period, she will not pray or fast, but she shall redeem the fast after Ramadan, but not Salaat."

The Fundamental Elements of Fasting

6. The Fundamental Elements of Fasting

Fasting is a form of worship, which is entirely private. The All-Knowing Allah knows that his servant is fasting. You are required to take food before dawn and abstain from eating and drinking until it is time to break the fast. But if you eat and drink secretly in between, no one except Allah will know about it. This private nature of fasting ensures that you have a strong Faith in Allah who knows everything. Only if your Faith is true and strong, you will not think of eating and drinking secretly, even in the hottest summer, when your throat dries up with thirst, you will not drink a drop of water. To do all this how strong must the fear of Allah be in your heart?. Had you the slightest doubt in Allah, and in meeting Him in the Hereafter, you would not complete such a fast. This strength could be developed only when you understand the fundamental elements of fasting which are illustrated as follows:

6.1. The intention

There is agreement among Muslim scholars that the centre of intention is the heart. Whatever a person wants to do and for what reason and for the sake of whom will be known by none but Allah the All-Knower. Thus, the intention needs not be uttered. The exception is on pilgrimage, where verbal utterance of intention is premised. In the case of fasting, intention is determined by the heart seeking to please Allah and obeying His commands. Regarding the inevitability of

having intention and about the sincerity in acts of worship, Allah the Most High said:

> *'And they were ordained nothing else than to worship Allah, keeping religion pure for Him'* (Al-Bayyinah, Verse: 5).

This is also emphasized by Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* who said:

> *"Actions are judged according to the intention behind them, and for everyone is what he intended"* (Bukhari and Muslim)

Thus, intention is obligatory upon every Muslim upon whom the fasting regulations and rulings are binding. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Hafsah (may Allah be pleased with her), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"He who does not resolve to fast (i.e. intention to fast) before it is Fajr (dawn), then there is no fast from him"*. (Ahmed and Ibn Khuzaimah).

The fact that one knows he is fasting the next day is "intention". The fact that one takes Suhoor (pre-dawn meal), he will have achieved the requirement of "intention". The fact that one refrain whatever nullifies fasting during daylight hours, with the intention of fasting, he will have achieved the requirements of "intention", even if he did not observe Suhoor. There is near consensus among Muslim scholars that after intention, there is no harm in eating, drinking or having sexual activities as long as it is done before dawn.

6.2. Refraining from eating, drinking and anything that nullifies the fast from dawn to sunset.

Allah the Most High said:

> *'Eat and drink until the white thread becomes distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn. Then strictly observe the fast until nightfall'*. (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 187]

6.3. Abstention from sexual relations and the like from dawn to sunset.

Just like eating and drinking Allah the Most High has forbidden sexual relations during the fast by day, but permitted it after the fast is broken at night till the next fast commences. This is indicated in the Qur'an:

> *'It is made lawful for you to have sexual relations with your wives on the night of As-Saum (the fasts). They are Lîbas [i.e. body cover, or screen (i.e. you enjoy the pleasure of living with her) for you and you are the same for them. Allah knows that you used to deceive yourselves, so He turned to you (accepted your repentance) and forgave you. So now have sexual relations with them and seek that which Allah has ordained for you (offspring), and eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night), then complete your Saum (fast) till the nightfall...'* (Al-Baqarah, Verse 187)

The Underlying Principles of Fasting

7. The Underlying Principles of Fasting

Why do Muslims fast?

There are many reasons why people do fast, depending upon the social, cultural, religious, and economic understanding of the people or the individuals. Some of the reasons why people do fast can be: to lose weight, to lower blood pressure, to cut down on smoking, to digest food better, to learn better eating habits, to share with the hungry, to call attention to political or social issues and so on. However, Muslims fast as a religious obligation upon them, so as to gain the pleasure of Allah the Most High and to earn His blessings and rewards.

The reason Muslims fast can be found directly in the Qur'an and the sayings of Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. The divine purpose of fasting is to develop righteousness and to attain a spiritual state of mind where it turns towards Allah for the whole day. Another purpose is to train self-discipline and an exercise in patience and endurance. A person who observes fast becomes the master of his/her desires instead of a slave to them, thus making one feel closer to Allah because He only knows whether a person is fasting or not. Therefore it is a test as to whether one wants to please Allah or not. Fasting provides a direct communication between the slaves and the Creator (Allah the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever exists). It is an act of worship that enriches self-worth, self-strength, self-discipline and control. It moves the believers from an

unauthentic to an authentic environment that enriches their vital needs of physical and spiritual. It makes us forget about our beginning, it awakens the mind and hearts thinking and being conscious of Allah.

Fasting has also social benefits. Fasting gives the Muslims a feeling of brotherhood in practice. It draws them closer together and fills their hearts with love and affection. Narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: "

> My nation is given five privileges in the month of Ramadan that no nation was given before:
>
> - The khaloof (the odour of the mouth of a fasting person) is sweeter in the sight of Allah than the fragrance of musk;
> - The angels keep praying to Allah to forgive the fasting people until they break their fast;
> - Allah decorates Paradise every day saying to it 'My righteous slaves are about to be comforted of their burdens and sufferings and enter you';
> - The Shayteen (Satans) are chained during this month;
> - Sins of the believers are forgiven by the last night of Ramadan". (Muslim)

Fasting brings passion under control. Passion is the root of all evils, and this can be regulated by the method of fasting. Allah the Most High created man and his passion, He knows the best

medicine for passion and therefore prescribed fasting. There are several sayings of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* relating to the virtues and merits, which a man receives from Allah by fasting in the month of Ramadan. In this month, the doors of mercy, forgiveness and kindness are specially opened and the doors of punishments are closed. Narrated Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"When the month of Ramadan arrives, the doors of Heaven are opened, the doors of Hell are closed and the devils are put under chains and according to another narration: the doors of mercy are opened"* (Bukhari and Muslim)

It has also been narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Whoever observes (fasts) during the month of Ramadan out of sincere Faith, and hoping to attain Allah's Rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven"*. (Al-Bukhari).

The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* has pointed out to us the real spirit of fasting and has explained that to go hungry and thirsty while ignoring the spirit of fasting carries no value in the sight of Allah The Most High. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"If one does not give up speaking falsehood and acting by it, Allah The Most High does not require him to give up eating and drinking"*. (Al-Bukhari).

Respected brothers and sisters in Islam, may Allah unite us upon love of Him and upon following the Sunnah of His Messenger

(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him). Having seriously glanced in the understanding of the aims of fasting, every Muslim needs to know the characteristics of the Prophet's *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* fast, its obligatory rules, its manner and its benefits and then put these into practice. When a Muslim maintains this attitude throughout the month of Ramadan, he/she will definitely come out a better Muslim. This is indicated in Allah's words:

> *'O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqoon (the pious)'*. (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 183)

Therefore, seeking the aid of Allah, it was decided to gather information pertaining these issues describing how the fast should be observed. Whatever is found within it to be correct and good is from Allah, and any mistakes are from us and from the Shaytaan (the devil).

8. General Recommendations of Fasting

Ramadan comes with blessings to the Muslims.The reports from the Qur'an and the Sunnah (tradition reports of the Prophet) encourage an increase in action to get reward as we fast out of gratefulness to Allah.There are a number of spiritual behaviours that should be practised during Ramadan.These are observed in accordance with the instruction of Allah the Most High and strongly recommended by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, his companions (may Allah be pleased with them) and Muslim scholars. Practicing and applying these principles, rules and behaviours helps the person maximize the physical as well as spiritual benefits of fasting. In general, performing deeds, which are from the Sunnah carry with them extra blessings. Now, when we combine these deeds with the uniqueness of the month of Ramadan, the rewards are unimaginable. It is strongly recommended by Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* to observe these general practices especially during Ramadan:

8.1. Having Pre-Dawn meal (Suhoor)

Suhoor is the eating and drinking at the end of the night with the intention of fasting. It is strongly emphasised and highly recommended by the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. He *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* ordered for one intending to fast, that he should partake of the Suhoor, to the

extent that he *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* forbade us to leave it, saying:

> *"The Suhoor is a blessed meal, so do not leave it, even if one of you just takes drops of water, since Allah sends mercy and His Angels seek forgiveness for those who take the Suhoor".* (Ahmad)

The time of Suhoor starts from midnight and ends a few minutes before Fajr. Zayd Ibn Thabit (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that:

> " *We took Suhoor with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and then we stood up for prayer. I said: 'How long was the interval between the adhan and Suhoor?'. He replied: The time required for the recitation of fifty verses".* (Bukhari and Muslim)

It is recommended to delay the Suhoor as close to Fajr as possible. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Zaid bin Thabit (may Allah be pleased with him):

> *"We took Suhoor with the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) and then we stood up for Fajr. It was asked: 'How long was the gap between the two?' He replied 'the time required for the recitation of fifty verses".* (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* also instructed us saying:

> "Hasten the breaking of the fast and delay the Suhoor". (Sahih Al-Jami').

Merits/Values of Suhoor:

As indicated by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, there are blessings and spiritual values in Suhoor. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Take Suhoor for there is blessing in it"*. (Bukhari and Muslim).

These blessings are both religious, which includes obeying the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and opposing the people of the Book, and worldly, which includes enjoyment of pure food and drink in order to keep strong and healthy for fasting. These merits and values can be illustrated as follows:

For Blessing:

It is narrated from Abdullah Ibn Al Harith (may Allah be pleased with him) who reported from one of the Companions of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* that:

> *"I entered upon the Prophet and he was taking the Suhoor and he said: 'It is a blessing which Allah has given to you, so do not leave it'"*. (Ahmad and Nasaaee)

Similarly, Abu Said al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that: The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"The Suhoor is a meal of blessings, so do not leave it, even if one of you just takes a gulp of water, since Allah sends mercy and His angels seek forgiveness for those who take Suhoor"*. (Ahmad)

The above ahadeeth indicate that Suhoor is a Sunnah of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. This meal is blessed and maintains one's energy and vitality during fasting.

Distinction from the people of the Book:
Suhoor is a distinctive mark with which Allah the Most High has blessed the Muslim nation. It is related from Amr Ibn Al Aas (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"The difference between our observance of fast and that of the People of the Book is the taking of Suhoor".* (Muslim)

These reports from the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and actions of his companions (may Allah be pleased with them all) leave no room for us to miss Suhoor.

8.2. Breaking the fast hastily
Hastening in breaking the fast has been recommended by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. It is reported from Sahl Ibn Sad (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"My people will continue doing good deeds as long as they hasten in breaking the fast".* (Bukhari and Muslim)

The person who breaks the fast in its early time is best loved by Allah the Most High because he is a true follower of the Sunnah of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"Allah the Most High says: 'from amongst my slaves, the Quicker the one is in breaking the fast, the dearer is he to me". (At-Tirmidhi)

It has been the practice of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* of breaking the fast and performing Maghrib prayer in the early moments of the prescribed time. Abu Atiyah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that: Masruq and I visited Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) and said:

"There are two of the Messenger's companions and neither of them holds back from doing good acts. One of them hastens to break the fast and hastens to pray while the other delays breaking the fast and delays praying the Maghrib. She asked which of them hastens to break the fast and hastens to pray? We told her that it was Abdullah Ibn Masood. She said that Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) used to do so". (Muslim)

8.3. Breaking the fast with fresh/dry dates or water

It is desirable for the fasting person to break the fast with a few dates or, if that is not obtainable, with plain water right after sunset. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that:

"The Messenger of Allah used to break his fast before offering prayers with some fresh dates, but if there were no fresh dates, he would take a few dry dates and if there were no dry dates he would take a few drops of water". (Tirmidhee)

Again, Salman Ibn Aamer (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"When one of you break fast, he should do so with dates, but if he can not find any, he should break his fast with water for its pure". (Abu Dawood)

8.4. Supplication at the time of breaking the fast

The person who observes fasting should make use of this spiritual month and call upon Allah with supplications for anything good, and hopefully the good of this life and the Hereafter will be attained.The Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to say the following recommended Dua at the time of breaking the fast: "Allah humma laka sumna, wa 'ala rizqika aftarna"

"O Allah for you we have fasted And on Your provision we have broken the fast". (Abu Dawood)

8.5. Using the Siwak (tooth stick brush)

It is recommended for the fasting person to make use of the Siwak while fasting, at the beginning or the ending of the day. Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that: the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"It (i.e. Siwak) is a purification for the mouth and it is a way of seeking Allah's pleasures" (Bukhari).

And narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

'But for my fear that it would be hard for my followers, I would have ordered them to clean their teeth with Siwak on every performance of ablution.

8.6. Patience in obeying Allah

A person, who observes fast, should try to increase his obedience to Allah during his fast and avoid His disobedience. He/she should exert the utmost in patience and humbleness.

8.7. Safeguarding the fast (i.e. guarding the limbs from what Allah has forbidden)

Fasting, as prescribed, does not merely refer to withholding from food, drink and desires. There are additional spiritual actions a person observing fast should implement in order not to cause its reward to diminish and to attain the benefits of fasting. A person, who observes fast, should perform his obligations and abstain from the prohibitions. It has been pointed out that during fasting not only food, drink and sexual intercourse are prohibited but the improper use of the other organs of the body as well. The one who observes fasting should fulfil all the requirements, which include:

1. A person should be extraordinarily cautious in using senses, mind and, especially, the tongue; to abstain from careless gossip and avoid all suspicious motions. A person who observes fast must abstain from speaking lies, backbiting, deceiving anyone or indulging in any thing prohibited - be it verbal or physical. It is related from Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: Allah the Most High said:

> *"Every act of the son of Adam is for him except As-Siyam (fasting) which is for Me and I Alone will reward for it. Fasting is a shield; when any one is fasting he should neither indulge in bad language nor he should raise his voice. If any one reviles him or tries to quarrel with him, he should say: I am fasting. By Him in whose hand is the life of Muhammad, the breath of a*

> *man who is fasting is sweeter with Allah on the Day of Judgement than the fragrance of musk. The one who fasts experiences two joys: a joy when he breaks his fast and a joy when he meets his Lord".* (Bukhari and Muslim)

The above hadeeth highlights not only the etiquettes of fasting but also brings into focus the true implication of it. Fasting is not thus mere abstention from food, drink and sex, but also keeping away all evils and ills and implementing virtues.

2. Fasting of the heart from that which leads to prohibited, disliked or non beneficial things. Allah the Most High says:

> *'...and follow not that of which you have no knowledge (e.g. one's saying 'I have seen' while in fact he has not seen or 'I have heard' while he has not heard). Verily the hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those you will be questioned (by Allah)'.* (Al- Isra,Verse: 36)

3. Abstaining from falsehood and indecent actions. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"If one does not abandon falsehood and indecent actions Allah has no need that he should abstain from his food and his drink".* (Al-Bukhari)

Hence, a person observing fast should say that which will not harm his fast or do actions that would not spoil their fast. The truthful and trusted Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"It may be that a fasting person attains nothing but hunger and thirst from his fasting".* (Ahmad, Ibn Majah and Bayhaqee).

4. Lowering the gaze and guarding the private parts from sexual intercourse. Allah the Most High says:

> *"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their private parts. That is pure for them..."* (An-Nur, Verse: 30)

Again Allah, in the same surah, says:

> *'Tell the believing women to lower their gaze and protect their private parts...'* (An-Nur, Verse: 31)

8.8. Not being excessive in food and drink during Ramadan

The person should eat what is enough for him because too much eating and drinking produces too much tiredness and thus the purpose of fasting is lost. Allah the Most High says:

> *'Eat and drink and do not be excessive. Verily Allah does not love those who are excessive'.* (Al-A'araf, Verse: 31)

Excellence of Observing the Fast

9. Excellence of Observing the Fast

Fasting has many benefits to the believers. Like all the religious practices in Islam (Submission), fasting will make the believer stronger as a believer, closer to the Creator (Allah), more blessed and happier to be with Him. We have been informed of the benefits and virtues of fasting expressed in the Qur'an and in the Sunnah of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. These benefits and virtues motivate every one to perfect his/her fasting. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* has pointed out to us the real spirit of fasting and has explained that to go hungry and thirsty while ignoring the spirit of fasting carries no value in the sight of Allah the Most High. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:"

> *If one does not give up speaking falsehood and acting by it, Allah does not require him to give up eating and drinking"*. (Al-Bukhari).

True Fasting (every fast that is done with sincerity, seeking the pleasure of Allah, the Most High, and performed in accordance with the way explained by Allah's Messenger) has many virtues. The virtues of fasting in general and of Ramadan in particular will be explained as follows:

9.1. Fasting is a means to develop Taqwa

Fasting is a spiritual worship that teaches good morals like honesty, faithfulness and loyalty and induces piety and fear of

Allah. This is indicated in the following Verse:

> *'O you who believe! Observing As-Saum (the fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become Al-Muttaqûn'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 183)

The above verse clearly shows that the ultimate virtue of fasting is to develop in the heart of a person the Taqwa of Allah i.e. fear of Allah and keeping all duties to Him. This could be done by performing good deeds that Allah has ordained and abstaining from all sorts of evil that He has forbidden.

Indeed the person who has attained Taqwa has attained excellence in the worship of Allah. In many verses of the Qur'an Allah says that the reward of the people of Taqwa is Paradise. I will just mention here two verses in regard of the success of the people of Taqwa and their reward with Paradise. The people of Taqwa are the successful people in this life and in the hereafter where they will be the dwellers of Paradise. Allah the Most High said:

> *'This is the Book; in it is guidance sure without doubt to the Muttaqeen [people of Taqwa]. Who believe in the Unseen are steadfast in prayer and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in the Revelation sent to you and sent before you and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on (true) guidance from their Lord and it is these who are the successful'. (Al-Baqarah, Verses: 1-5)*

He also said:

> *'Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord and for a*

garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth prepared for the Muttaqeen (the pious)'. (Ali-`Imraan, Verse: 133)

9.2. Fasting is a means of seeking nearness to Allah the Mighty

Belief in Allah, in His Lordship and His Worship instils in the individual Allah's love. Performing Allah's instructions and avoiding His proscriptions are the means of achieving ultimate happiness in this life and the Hereafter for the individual as well as society. Allah the Most High said:

> *'Whoever works righteousness, whether male or female, while he/she is a true believer (of Islam), verily to him We will give a good life (in this world with respect, contentment and lawful provision), and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter)'.* (An-Nahl,Verse: 96)

So, Allah has ordered us to fast and He Alone knows what is better for us. This is indicated in the following Verse:

> *'...and fast, it is better for you, if you know'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 184)

Therefore we should strive to perfect it and obey the commands of our Lord, thereby to be closer to and attain His Pleasure.

9.3. Fasting is a means of attaining Allah's forgiveness

Actuality none of us is perfect. We all have some weaknesses and shortcomings. We find ourselves committing sins out of

ignorance or out of submission to our desires and thus driving ourselves away from the straight path. Committing sins regularly will darken and harden the heart. It may even lead a person to reject Allah completely (may Allah forbid) or lead him to commit a bigger sin. In Islam there is no recourse for a sinner except to Ask Allah for forgiveness from the heart. In fact seeking forgiveness of Allah and turning to Him in Repentance is a part of Faith. This is indicated in the words of Allah:

> 'And turn in repentance and in obedience with true Faith (Islamic Monotheism) to your Lord and submit to Him, (in Islam), before the torment comes upon you, then you will not be helped'. (Az-Zumar:Verse 54)

We should never despair from Allah's mercy since He said of Himself that He is the Most Merciful the oft-Forgiving. As part of this infinite Mercy He made accessible for us various ways of achieving forgiveness. Among the most significant and useful of these ways of forgiveness is fasting in general and Ramadan in particular. This is clearly indicated in the following verse where Allah the Most High said:

> *'Verily, the Muslim men and women, the believing men and women, the men and women who are obedient (to Allah), the men and women who are truthful (in their speech and deeds), the men and the women who are patient, the men and the women who are humble (before their Lord), the men and the women who give charity, the men and the women who fast, the men and the women who guard their chastity (from illegal sexual acts) and the men and the women who remember Allah much. Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward'.* (Al-Ahzaab, Verses: 33-35)

Let us discover this glad tiding from the sweet words of Allah's Messenger, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. Narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"The five prayers, the Friday prayer to the Friday prayer and Ramadan to Ramadan are an expiation to that which is between them if the major sins are stayed away from".* (Muslim)

Again, it is reported from Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"He who fasts Ramadan with faith and seeking its reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven".* (Bukhari and Muslim)

He also narrated that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Whoever establishes prayers during the nights of Ramadan (and that is called Qiyam) faithfully out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards (not for showing off), all his past sins will be forgiven.* (Al-Bukhari).

Furthermore he narrated that the Prophet, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, climbed upon the mimbar (pulpit) and said:

> *"Aameen (O Allah grant it), aameen, aameen". So it was said, "O Messenger of Allah, you climbed upon the mimbar and said: "aameen, aameen, aameen"? So he said: "Jibraa'eel, `alaihi assalam, came to me and said, 'Whoever reaches the month of Ramadan and does not have (his sins) forgiven and so enters Fire, then may Allah distance him, say aameen". So I said*

"aameen". (Ibn Khuzaimah, Ahmad and al-Baihaqui)

Allah loves those people who, after committing a sin, immediately give up and seek forgiveness for their sins from Allah. By seeking forgiveness, a relationship with Allah is constructed between man and His Creator. So we should constantly seek forgiveness from Allah and never feel despair of His Mercy.

9.4. Following the practice of the Prophets

We believe that the Shari'ah of the Prophet Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, is the religion of Islam which Allah the Most High has chosen for His slaves and does not accept from anyone any other religion, because He said:

> *'This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion'*. (Al-Ma'idah, Verse: 3)

The message it contains basically directs all mankind not only to believe in God (Allah) Alone but also it teaches them how to behave. Love of His Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* means that every Muslim should accept his Sunnah and act upon it. Therefore, when fasting, we have to strive hard to follow the way, which Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* proposed and practised. Abdullah Ibn 'Amr (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> The fast most loved by Allah is the fast of Dawood and the most loved prayer is the prayer of Dawood. He used to sleep half the night, pray for a third of the night, and then sleep during the last sixth of the night. He would

also fast one day and then eat on the next. (Ahmad).

Similarly, Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that the Messenger of Allah, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, used to fast till one would say that he would never stop fasting, and he would abandon fasting till one would say that he would never fast. I never saw Allah's Messenger fast for a whole month except the month of Ramadan, and did not see him fast in any month more than in the month of Sha'ban. (Bukhari). Following the practice of the Prophets is a great virtue which can be added to the virtues of fasting.

9.5. Getting a unique reward from Allah

Fasting is the most central duty to test the believer's faith and the depth of his/her sincerity and commitment to the concept of Tauheed (i.e. the Oneness of Allah). Of all the pillars of Islam, none is more unique than fasting. While there may be an appearance of Riya (showing off) in Salaat, Zakaat and Hajj there is no such possibility in fasting. The only One who knows that you are really fasting is Allah. It is easy to pretend to be fasting; while in hiding, you may eat or drink. Thus, fasting is considered a unique worship and Allah the Most High will give a special reward for it. Abu Hurairah, (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said that your Lord said:

> *"The Fast is for Me and I will give the reward for it, as he (the one who observes the fast) leaves his sexual desire, food and drink for My Sake. Fasting is a screen (from Hell) and there are two pleasures (moments of happiness or joys) for a fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord. And the smell of the mouth of a fasting person is better in Allah's Sight than the smell of musk."*
> (Al-Bukhari)

9.6. Fasting is a protection against sexual desires

Fasting teaches the believer self control because the fasting submitter controls his/her desire or need to drink or eat during the fasting period. People who learn self-control can resist wrongdoing or temptation to follow their friends or peers just to avoid embarrassment or to be like everyone else. Thus fasting is a shield, protecting the believer from sinful acts. For when you eat, the blood flow increases considerably, and the energy level increases, making it easier for Satan to use your own energy level to tempt you to commit sins. This is indicated in the saying of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* who said:

> *"Satan runs in the circulatory system of the son of Adam in the same way blood circulates in our system; so tighten his passages with hunger."* (Bukhari and Muslim)

We have been informed that fasting is a preventive practice against sexual desires. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* advised the youth who normally have strong desire of marriage, but cannot afford to marry, to fast, as fasting diminishes sexual desires. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Ibn Masood (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"O youths, whoever amongst you is able to marry then let him do so, since it restrains the eyes and protects the private parts, and he who is unable, then let him fast because it is a shield for him"*. (Bukhari and Muslim)

9.7. Fasting distances a person from the fire
Hell-Fire is the abode for penalty or torment, which Allah the Most High set up for the disbelievers, in which they will neither die nor live. Allah the Most High said:

> *'And fear the Fire, which is prepared for the disbelievers'.* (Al-Imran, Verse: 131)

Allah the Most High also said:

> *'Verily, Allah has cursed the disbelievers, and has prepared for them a flaming Fire. Wherein they will abide forever, and they will find neither a protector nor a helper'.* (Al-Ahzab, Verses 64-65).

The torture and horror in it cannot be imagined. They will eat bitter plants and the secretion of wounds, and drink boiling water, as described in the words of Allah:

> *'Verily, We have prepared for the Zalimin (polytheists, disbelievers, wrong-doers, etc.) a Fire whose walls will be surrounding them. And if they ask for help, they will be granted water like boiling oil that will scald their faces. Terrible the drink, and an evil dwelling'.* (Al-Kahf, Verse: 29).

Fasting for the sake of Allah is a means, which saves a Muslim person from Hell Fire. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Saeed Al Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Every servant of Allah who observes fast for a day for the sake of Allah, will find his face further from the fire to the extent of a distance covered in seventy years".* (Agreed upon)

Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that Allah's messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Fasting is a shield by which a servant protects himself from the fire"*. (Ahmad)

9.8. Fasting causes a person to enter Paradise

Paradise is the abode of enjoyment, which Allah the Most High prepared for the believers (i.e. the righteous). Allah the Most High said:

> *'Race one with another in hastening towards Forgiveness from your Lord (Allah), and towards Paradise, the width whereof is as the width of heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers...'* (Al-Hadid, Verse: 21)

It has been mentioned that the righteous will acquire great dignity and honour in the Hereafter. They will be in eternal peace, happiness and in a state of complete satisfaction because of their sincere Faith. This is signified in Allah's words:

> *'(It will be said to the pious): "O (you) the one in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back to your Lord, Well-pleased (yourself) and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter you, then, among My honoured slaves, And enter you My Paradise!" 27-30'*. (Al-Fajr)

The blessing that they enjoy there, no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard and no human being has ever thought of. This is indicated in Allah's words:

'No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do'. (As-Sajdah, Verse: 17)

It has been confirmed by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* that fasting is a way to Paradise. Abu Umamah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

"O! Messenger of Allah tell me of an action by which I may enter Paradise." He said: "Take to Fasting, there is nothing like it". (Nasaaee, Ibn Hibbaan)

Ibn Hibban narrated that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: "If a woman prayed the five prayers, fasted in Ramadan, protected her honour and obeyed her husband; then she will be told (on the Day of Judgment): enter Paradise from any of its (eight) doors. Abu Umamah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

"I came to the Messenger of Allah and said: 'Order me to do a deed that will allow me to enter Paradise.' He said: 'Stick to fasting, as there is no equivalent to it.' Then I came to him again and he said: 'Stick to fasting." (Ibn Hibban, an-Nasa'i, and al-Hakim).

9.9. Fasting causes a person to enter Ar-Rayyaan

We have been informed that there is a special distinction for those who observe fasting. In paradise there is a gate, which is called Ar-Rayyaan through which only those who are faithful and observe fasting for the sake of Allah will enter on the Day of Judgement. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Sahl Ibn Sa'd (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Indeed there is a gate of Paradise called ar-Rayyaan. On the day of Resurrection those who fast will enter through it; no one enters it except for them, and when they have entered, it is closed so that no one enters it".* (Muslim)

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him),* saying:

> *"Anybody who spends a pair of something in Allah's Cause will be called from all the gates of Paradise, "O Allah's slave! This is good.' He who is amongst those who pray will be called from the gate of the prayer (in Paradise) and he who is from the people of Jihad will be called from the gate of Jihad, and he who is from those' who give in charity (i.e. Zakat) will be called from the gate of charity, and he who is amongst those who observe fast will be called from the gate of fasting, the gate of ar-Raiyan." Abu Bakr said, "He who is called from all those gates will need nothing," He added, "Will anyone be called from all those gates, O Allah's Apostle?" He said, "Yes, and I hope you will be among those, O Abu Bakr."* (Al-Bukhari)

This is what the pleasure of Allah is all about. The one who observes fasting becomes the selected person in the hour that every other person is busy reading the records of deeds. This is the time when fasting to seek Allah's pleasure will distance the believer's face from the hellfire and causes him/her to enter Ar-Rayyaan Gate to Paradise.

9.10. The acceptance of supplication

Turning in supplication to Allah and asking Him Alone in all matters is the key to salvation and the brainpower of Faith. We must have Faith in our Lord and believe that only Allah can respond to our Du'a. Allah the Most High listens to the

distressed person when he calls upon him and relieves him of his suffering. Allah has commanded us to call upon Him humbly and sincerely, promising us He will respond to our supplication and fulfil our needs. This is signified by the words of Allah:

> *'And your Lord said; 'Invoke Me (ask Me for anything) I will respond to your (invocation). Verily! Those who scorn My worship (do not invoke Me, and do not believe in My Oneness), they will surely enter Hell in humiliation'.* (Ghafir, Verse: 60)

Similarly, Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, has emphasized that:

> "Du'a (Supplication) is the essence of worship".

And in another narration

> "Du'a (Supplication) is the worship". (At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad).

Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* has highlighted desirable specific times and places for supplication. It has been mentioned that there is a Dua for a person who observes fasting which will never be rejected. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abdullah Ibn `Amr Ibn al-`Aas (may Allah be pleased with him), the Messenger of Allah, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, said:

> *"Indeed there is for the fasting person, when he breaks his fast, a supplication which is not rejected"*. (Ibn Majah, al-Hakim)

Similarly, Abdullah Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that he heard the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* saying:

> *"For the one fasting when he breaks his fast is a supplication which will be answered".* (Ibn Majah)

It is also reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Three, their supplication is nor rejected: the just leader, the one who fasts until he breaks his fast, and the supplication of the oppressed which Allah raises above the clouds, with the gates of heaven being opened, saying By My Might, I will give you victory even if it be after a little while".* (Ahmad, Tirmidhee and Nasaee).

Furthermore, Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"There are in the month of Ramadan in every day and night those to whom Allah grants freedom from the Fire, and there is for every Muslim a supplication which he can make and will be granted".* (Ahmad)

The best supplication to be used is the one reported from the Prophet, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and his companions (may Allah be pleased with them). For instance the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to say when breaking his fast:

> *"Thahaba aDh-Dhama'u wabtallatil-`urooqu wa thabata-l-ajru inshaa'a Allah". Which means: The thirst is gone, the veins are moisten and the reward is certain, if Allah wills.* (Abu Dawood, al-Baihaqee)

9.11. Fasting is a means of intercession on the Day of Judgement

Believing in the intercession as a part of Faith has been indicated in Allah's words and the Hadeeth of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), he had heard the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* saying:

> *"A believer will attain nearness to his Lord on the Day of Judgement and will envelop him in His Mercy. He will make him confess his sins by saying: Do you recognise this sin and this sin? He will reply: Lord, I recognise. Then He will say: I concealed it up for you in the world, and I forgive it you today. Then the record of his good deeds will be handed to him".* (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

We believe in the special great intercession of the Prophet Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, which is exclusively limited to him. Narrated Jabir bin Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "I have been given five (things) which were not given to any one else before me, one of them is that he has been given the right of intercession on the Day of Resurrection". (Al-Bukhari).

We have also been informed that intercession will also be granted to martyrs, to the Qur'an and fasting which will intercede for believers from the nation of Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr (may Allah be pleased with him), the Messenger of

Allah, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, said:

> *"The fast and the Qur'an are two intercessors for the servant of Allah on the Day of Resurrection. The fast will say: 'O Lord, I prevented him from his food and desires during the day. Let me intercede for him.' The Qur'an will say: 'I prevented him from sleeping at night. Let me intercede for him.' And their intercession will be accepted."* (Ahmad)

9.12. Fasting is also a means of Kafarah (expiation)

Allah the Most High has set limits prescribed in the Qur'an or mentioned by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. Allah the Most High said:

> *'These are the limits of Allah, which He makes plain for the people who have knowledge'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 129)

Among these limits for example are matters related to (deliberate and accidental) oaths, themes correlated with Al-Qasas (law of retribution), the subject of Dhihar (the saying of a husband to his wife: you are to me like the back of my mother i.e. unlawful for me to approach), laws associated with the rules of pilgrimage, etc. Honouring and understanding these limits is an indication of perfect Faith. Allah the Most High promised glad tidings to those who observe the limits set by Him. He said:

> *'And whoever honours the sacred things of Allah, then that is better for him in the sight of his Lord…'.* (Al-Hajj, Verse: 30)

The penalty of violating Allah's limits is severe and for a person to free himself from a disgraceful punishment, he should be subjected to certain penalties prescribed by Allah and His

Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. Among these penalties are Kafarah (Expiation), Fidyah (Ransom), Diya (blood-money) and others. Among the most significant way of how a person can free himself if he/she violates such limits is to observe fast. The following are a number of examples to illustrate this point:

1. Regarding the issue of Hajj (pilgrimage) or Umrah, it should be stressed that having once undertaken them, we must complete all rules set by Allah and His Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. However, if we could not complete any of the ceremonies ordained for any reason, a Kafarah (expiation) or Fidyah (ransom) should be offered. Fasting has been prescribed as one of the ways for expiation. This is indicated in Allah's words:

> *'And perform properly (i.e. all the ceremonies according to the ways of Prophet Muhammad), the Hajj and 'Umrah (i.e. the pilgrimage to Makkah) for Allah. But if you are prevented (from completing them), sacrifice a Hady (animal, i.e. a sheep, a cow, or a camel, etc.) such as you can afford, and do not shave your heads until the Hady reaches the place of sacrifice. And whosoever of you is ill or has an ailment in his scalp (necessitating shaving), he must pay a Fidyah (ransom) of either observing Saum (fasts) (three days) or giving Sadaqah (charity - feeding six poor persons) or offering sacrifice (one sheep). Then if you are in safety and whosoever performs the 'Umrah in the months of Hajj, before (performing) the Hajj, (i.e. Hajj-at-Tamattu' and Al-Qirân), he must slaughter a Hady such as he can afford, but if he cannot afford it, he should observe Saum (fasts) three days during the Hajj and seven days after his return (to his home), making ten days in all. This is for him whose family is not present at Al-Masjid-al-Harâm (i.e. non-resident of Makkah). And fear Allah much and know that*

> *Allah is Severe in punishment'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 196)

2. Again during Hajj or Umrah, shaving the head while in a state of Ihraam is a sin. Fasting is one of the ways to expiate for it. (See the above Verse).

3. Similarly, committing any intentional illegal action during the Hajj or Umrah needs expiation. Fasting is prescribed as one of the ways for expiation. Allah the Most High said:

> *'O you who believe! Kill not game while you are in a state of Ihrâm for Hajj or 'Umrah (pilgrimage), and whosoever of you kills it intentionally, the penalty is an offering, brought to the Ka'bah, of an eatable animal (i.e. sheep, goat, cow, etc.) equivalent to the one he killed, as adjudged by two just men among you; or for expiation, he should feed Masâkin (poor persons), or its equivalent in Saum (fasting), that he may taste the heaviness (punishment) of his deed...'.* (Al-Ma'idah, Verse: 95)

4. Likewise, hunting while in a state of Ihraam during Hajj (see the above Verse)

5. Killing unintentionally a person from a people with whom you have a treaty: Allah the Most High said:

> *'Never should a believer kill a believer; but (If it so happens) by mistake, (Compensation is due): If one (so) kills a believer, it is ordained that he should free a believing slave, and pay compensation to the deceased's family, unless they remit it freely. If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you, and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave (Is enough). If he belonged to a people with whom you have treaty of Mutual*

> *alliance, compensation should be paid to his family, and a believing slave is freed. For those who find this beyond their means, (is prescribed) a fast for two months running: by way of repentance to Allah. For Allah has all knowledge and all wisdom'*. (An-Nisaa',Verse: 92)

6. In terms of defying deliberate oaths, fasting is prescribed by Allah as one of the ways for expatiating the oath. This is indicated in the words of Allah:

> *'Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths, but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: for expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths you have sworn. But keep to your oaths. Thus doth Allah make clear to you His signs, that you may be grateful'*. (Al-Ma'idah,Verse: 89)

7. Adhihaar; the saying of a husband to his wife; you are to me like the back of my mother (i.e. unlawful to me). Fasting has been prescribed as one of the ways for expiation. Allah the Most High said:

> *'And those who make unlawful to them (their wives) (by Ad-Dhihar) and wish to free themselves from what they uttered, (the penalty) in that case (is) the freeing of a slave before they touch each other. That is an admonition to you (so that you may not return to such an ill thing). And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. 'And he who finds not (the money for freeing a slave) must fast two successive months before they both touch each other. And for him who is unable to do so, he should feed sixty of Miskîn (poor). That is in order that you*

may have perfect Faith in Allah and His Messenger. These are the limits set by Allah. And for disbelievers, there is a painful torment'. 3-4 (Surat Al-Mujadalah)

10. Warning for those who do not Fast During Ramadan

Allah the Almighty has constructed the universe upon a certain balance and has likewise ordered this balance upon humanity. The great religion of Islam offers perfect guidance for every branch of our lives. It offers a programme of action for everything that it prescribes. The primary objectives of Salah, Zakah and Fasting are to bring us closer to Allah and inculcate taqwa (piety and self restraint) within us. But the fact is that when Islam is taken as a unitary whole and its entire programme implemented, each of its pillars reinforces the other and serves multiple purposes. Fasting in Ramadan is a part of the broader programme that Islam prescribes for man to fulfil his moral and spiritual destiny in this world and in the Hereafter. It is a special worship designed to develop in man the ability to exercise self-restraint and patience for the pleasure of Allah the Most High.

Thus, denying or ignoring fasting excludes a person from the fold of Islam. Ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that: Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"The roots of Islam and the foundations of the Deen (religion) are three, upon them Islam is built, whoever leaves one of them has disbelieved in them and his blood is lawful: Testifying that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, the prescribed prayers, and fasting in Ramadan."* (Abu Ya'la, Ad Daylami,

and verified by Ad Dhahabi)

Ad Dhahabi said: With the believers it is agreed that whoever leaves a fast in Ramadan without sickness he is worse than the adulterer and the addicted drinker. In fact the believers have doubt about his Islam.

11. Desirable Acts in Ramadan

The entire month of Ramadan is a season for virtues, worship and obedience of Allah. We are encouraged to do good deeds frequently and with full preparation in this month. Therefore, we have to strive hard in the days and nights of Ramadan to follow the practice of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* to seek the Pleasure of Allah and to attain the benefits of fasting during Ramadan.

11.1. Benevolence and Generosity

Spending out charity is recommended during all time, but it is particularly emphasized during the month of Ramadan which gives the believers a chance to feel what a hungry needy person feels when he/she does not have any food to eat. In this month the believers can understand the importance of giving in charity and helping the hungry and needy people. Allah's Messenger urged the fasting Muslim to be generous in Ramadan and to increase in voluntary acts of devotion or worship. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that:

> *"The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) was the most generous of men and he was most generous during Ramadan when Jibreel would visit him every night and recite the Holy Qur'an to him"*. (Bukhari and Muslim)

We are encouraged, if we want more reward, to feed fasting brothers and sisters for we will get the reward of their fasting

besides ours!. It is reported from Zayd Ibn Khalid (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"He who provides something to the observer of fast for breaking the fast earns the same reward as the one who observes the fast without diminishing*". (Ahmad and Tirmidhee)

It is also reported from Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* came to visit Sa'eed Ibn Ubadah (may Allah be pleased with him) who presented bread and olive oil to him. The Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* ate and said:

> *"Those who were observing fast, have broken fast with you and the pious men have eaten your food and the angels invoked blessings on you"*. (Abu Dawood)

When invited to break the fast, the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to supplicate for his hosts by saying:

> *"Aftara `indakumus-sa'imoon" Wa-Akala ta`amakumul-abraar, wa sallat `alaikumul-mala'ikah,"*.

The Meaning is:

> *"May Allah reward you for providing a fasting people with food to break their fast, May the righteous eat your food, may the angels seek forgiveness for you."* (Abu Dawud)

11.2. Offering night prayers (Taraweeh)

The establishment of night prayers have been recommended and praised by Allah the Most High and His Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. Allah the Most High said:

'And those who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing'. (Al-Furqan, Verse 64)

Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"O people! Spread peace; feed the needy, and join the blood ties among the next of kin; and establish prayer while people are at sleep, you will enter Paradise peacefully." (Tirmidhi)

The night prayer of Ramadan (Taraweeh) has been especially underlined for the spiritual rewards awaiting the observers of this prayer. It is an emphasized Sunnah, which is similar to Fardh prayer to be performed in congregation. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* did offer it in congregation and the companions conformed to his practice. He encouraged us to perform Taraweeh and he approved it, then we have no choice but to follow him if we want Allah to be pleased with us. He *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* saw some companions during one night of Ramadan praying in congregation in one corner of the mosque. He asked: 'what are they doing? He was told that Ubai (may Allah be pleased with him) leads the people who have not memorised any parts of the Qur'an. He then said: 'They have done well'. (At-Tirmidhi).

Thus every Muslim should attend Taraweeh prayers, including women, provided they are properly covered. Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: "Prevent not the women servants of Allah, from going to the mosques of Allah". However, when they attend the mosque they should be modest, raising not their voices, and or showing their beauty. They should be directed to pray in places especially provided

for them. They are advised to leave the mosque as soon as the Imam finishes the prayer. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Umm Salmah (may Allah be pleased with her), who said: "When Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* ends the prayer, the women would stand up to leave and the Messenger would remain in his place for a while." Umm Salmah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: Allah is the best knower, but perhaps the Messenger did that so women would leave before men could overtake them". (Al-Bukhari)

Praying during the nights of Ramadan is specially emphasised in the last ten nights. Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that during the last ten days of Ramadan, the Messenger of Allah would wake his wives up during the night and then remain apart from them [that is, being busy in acts of worship] (Al-Bukhari and Muslim). Another narration in Muslim states: "He would strive (to do acts of worship) during the last ten days of Ramadan more than he would at any other time". Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) also reported that with the start of the last ten days of Ramadan, the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to tighten his waist belt (i.e. work hard) and used to pray all the night, and used to keep his family awake for the prayers. (Bukhari).

Merits of performing night prayers (Taraweeh)

It has been pointed out by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* that whosoever offers night prayers (Taraweeh) with faith and seeking Allah's Pleasure he/she will have his/her past sins forgiven. This is indicated in the Hadeeth reported by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"He who fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeking his

> *reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven; he who prays during the night in Ramadan with faith and seeking his reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven; and he who passes Lailatul Qadr in prayer with faith and seeking his reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven".* (Bukhari and Muslim)

Amr ibn Murrah al-Juhanee, (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that: A man came to the Prophet, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and said:"

> O Messenger of Allah, what if I testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah, and I observe the five daily prayer, and I pay the Zakah, and I fast and stand in prayer (at night, i.e. Qiyam) in Ramadan, then amongst who shall I be?" He *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: "amongst the true followers of the Prophets and the martyrs" (Ibn Hibban).

11.3. Recitation/Studying the Qur'an

Recitation of the Qur'an and studying it (i.e. reading and understanding of the Qur'an) is recommended for every Muslim during all time, but it is required more during the month of Ramadan. The reason for the stress on the Qur'an is that the Qur'an and the month of Ramadan are closely linked with each other. The Qur'an was sent down from the seventh heaven (Al-Wah Al-Mafouth) to the first heaven (Biatul Eizah) in the month of Ramadan. This is indicated in Allah's words:

> *'The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong)...'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse 185)

Therefore, the person who observes fasting is encouraged to read the Qur'an daily and to attempt to complete reading it from the beginning to the end during this month. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to increase his recitation of the Qur'an in Ramadan and Jibreel would check his recitation of the Qur'an in Ramadan (Bukhari). We have been informed that there are significant merits and great rewards for those who recite the Holy Qur'an and act upon its injunctions:

1. People who read the Qur'an in accordance with the principles of At-Tajwid (Rules of recitation) will be associated with the Noble, virtuous and honourable recording angels. Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that: the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "The one who is proficient in the recitation of the Qur'an will be with the honourable and obedient scribes (angels)...". (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

2. People who love and act upon the teachings of the Qur'an (its laws and orders) will be blessed with great honour by Allah Who will elevate them and grant them a high rank. They are loved by Allah and get pleasure from public respect. Those who disregard the teachings of the Qur'an will be disgraced and dishonoured in both this world and the Hereafter. Narrated Umar bin Al-Khatab (may Allah be pleased with him) Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "Verily, Allah elevates some people with this Qur'an and humiliates others" (Muslim)

3. The believer who recites the Qur'an and teaches it, is considered to be the best amongst the believers. Uthman bin Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "The best among you is he who learns the Holy Qur'an and teaches it" (Al-Bukhari).

4. Remembering the Qur'an is a means to get Allah's grace and attain higher ranks in Paradise. The more one remembers the Qur'an, the greater his heart will be filled with Faith and the higher would be the status that he will go on attaining through its blessings. This is indicated in Allah's words:

> *'Verily, those who recite the Book of Allah (this Qur'an), and perform As-Salat (prayer), and spend (in charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for a (sure) trade gain that will never perish. 29 'That He may pay them their wages in full, and give them (even) more, out of His Grace. Verily! He is OftForgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (good deeds and to recompense). 30'.* (Fatir)

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-As (may Allah be pleased with him): the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "The one who was devoted to the Qur'an will be told on the Day of Judgement: 'Recite and ascend (in ranks) as you used to recite when you were in the world. Your rank will be at the last verse you recite". (Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi).

5. The Qur'an will intercede with Allah in the Day of Judgement on behalf of those who used to recite it and apply it.

Abu Umamah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* saying:

> "Recite the Holy Qur'an, because on the Day of Resurrection, it will come as an intercessor for those who recite it". (Muslim).

The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Fasting and the Qur'an will intercede for the servant on the Day of Judgement. Fasting will say: My Lord, I prevented him from food and drink during the day, and the Qur'an will say: My Lord, I prevented him from sleep during the night, so give us intercession for him."* (Ahmad and Nisaaee).

The above merits imply:

- Reading the Qur'an to ourselves,
- Studying it to understand its rules and regulations,
- Acting upon it so as to accord our knowledge, life and desires with its laws,
- Teaching it to others.

11.4. Seclusion in a mosque (I'tikaf)

This is the act of spending the last nights of Ramadan in a mosque in seclusion for the purpose of full attachment in worshipping Allah, seeking His pleasure and thinking of those actions that results in nearness to Him. Allah the Most Merciful prescribed I'tikaf for the believers, so that the heart be fully occupied with Allah alone, remembering Him alone, thinking of how to attain His pleasure and cutting off from preoccupation with the creation. Allah the Most Merciful says:

"... and We covenanted with Ibrahim and Isma'il, that they should purify My House for those who circle it, or use it as a retreat, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer)." (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 125)

I'tikaf is highly recommended in Ramadan as described in the hadeeth of Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) who reported that the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*:

"used to perform I'tikaf during the last ten days of Ramadan until Allah the Mighty and Majestic, took away his life, then his wives followed this practice after him". (Bukhari and Muslim)

The above hadeeth also contains a proof of the permissibility for women to perform I'tikaf. However, this permissibility is conditional, i.e. it should be performed according to Islamic Shariah. There are a number of prohibited actions that a person during I'tikaf should observe. If a person performs one of the following acts, his I'tikaf will be nullified:

6. It is not allowed for those who observe I'tikaf to have sexual relations with their wives. Allah the Most High said:

'But do not have sexual relations with them (your wives) while you are in retreat in the mosque. These are the limits of Allah do not approach them'. (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 187)

7. Intentionally leaving the mosque without any need to do so, even if it is for just a short time. In such a case, one would not be staying in the mosque, which is one of the principles of I'tikaf.

8. Abandoning belief in Islam, as this would nullify all acts of worship. If you ascribe a partner to Allah, your work will fail and you will be among the losers.

9. Losing one's reason due to insanity or drunkenness, or the onset of menstruation or post-childbirth bleeding, all of which disqualifies a person for I'tikaf.

10. Sexual intercourse. Allah the Most High says:

> *'But do not associate with your wives while you are in seclusion (I'tikaf) in the mosques. Those are Limits (set by) Allah. Approach not nigh thereto. Thus does Allah make clear His Signs to men: that they may learn self-restraint'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 187)

However the following acts are permissible for one who is making I'tikaf:

11. It is permitted for a person who observes I'tikaf to leave the mosque for a need. The person may leave his place of I'tikaf to bid farewell to his wife and a Woman can visit her husband who is in I'tikaf. This is evident from the action of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* when Safiyyah his wife visited him while he was performing I'tikaf. He accompanied her back to her house. Safiyyah (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

> *"The Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) was making I'tikaf (in the last ten nights of Ramadan), so I came to visit him at night. I talked with him for a while, then I stood up to leave. He said: 'Do not hurry for I will accompany you'. He stood along with me to accompany me back, with her dwelling being in the house of Usamah Ibn Zayd. Two men of the Ansar were*

passing by and on seeing the Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) they hastened by. The prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) said: 'Be at ease for she is Safiyyah bint Huyayy'. So they said: 'Allah is free from all imperfections! O Messenger of Allah! He said: 'Indeed Shaytan circulates in the son of Adam just as the circulation of blood, and I feared that he would insert an evil thought'". (Bukhari and Muslim).

12. A person observing I'tikaf may set up a small tent at the back of the mosque and make I'tikaf in it since Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) used to set up a small tent for the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* whenever he would perform I'tikaf.

13. Combing and cutting one's hair, clipping one's nails, cleaning one's body, wearing nice clothes or wearing perfume are all permissible. 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported:

> *"The Prophet was performing I'tikaf and he would put his head out through the opening to my room and I would clean [or comb in one narration] his hair. I was menstruating at the time." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).*

14. The person may go out to perform some need that he must perform. Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) reported:

> *"When the Prophet Performed I'tikaf, he brought his head close to me so I could comb his hair, and he would not enter the house except to fulfil the needs a person has."* (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Ibn al-Mundhir says:

> "The scholars agree that the one who performs I'tikaf may

leave the mosque in order to answer the call of nature, for this is something that he personally must perform, and he cannot do it in the mosque. Also, if he needs to eat or drink and there is no one to bring him his food, he may leave to get it. If one needs to vomit, he may leave the mosque to do so. For anything that he must do but cannot do in the mosque, he can leave it, and such acts will not void his I'tikaf, even if they take a long time. Examples of these types of acts would include washing one's self from sexual defilement and cleaning his body or clothes from impurities."

11.5. Seeking Laylatul-Qadr (the Night of Decree)

It is the greatest night of the year in which Qur'an was revealed. It is the night when every matter of ordainment is decreed. Allah says in what can be translated as:

> *"Verily! We have sent it (this Qur'an) down in the Night of Decree (Lailatul-Qadr). And what will make you know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months. Therein descend the angels and the Rooh (i.e. Jibreel [Gabriel]) by Allah's Permission with all Decrees, Peace! Until the appearance of dawn."* (Al-Qadr, Verse: 1-5)

And in Surat ad-Dukhan, Allah the Most High said:

> *"We sent it (this Qur'an) down on a blessed Night. Verily, We are ever warning (mankind of Our Torment). Therein (that Night) is decreed every matter of ordainment. Amran (i.e. a command or this Qur'an or His Decree of every matter) from Us. Verily, We are ever sending (the Messenger). (As) a Mercy from your Lord. Verily! He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.* (Dhukhan, Verse: 3-6)

A person who misses Lialatul-Qadr is really a deprived person! Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him),* said:

> *"The blessed month has come to you. Allah has made fasting during it obligatory upon you. During it the gates to Paradise are opened and the gates of Hellfire are locked, and the devils are chained. There is a night during this month, which is better than a thousand months. Whoever is deprived of its good is really deprived of something great.* (Ahmad, an-Nisa'i and al-Bayhaqi)

Therefore it is recommended that the Muslim who is eager to be obedient to Allah should stand in Prayer during this night out of Faith and in hope of a great reward, since if he does this, Allah will forgive his previous sins. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "Whoever stands (in prayer) in Lialatul-Qadr out of Faith and seeking reward then his previous sins are forgiven". (Bukhari).

It is recommended to supplicate a lot during this night, it is reported from our mother 'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that she said:

> "O Messenger of Allah! What if I knew which night Lialatul-Qadr was, then what should I say in it?" He said. "Say. - (Allahumma innaka 'affuwwun tuhibbul 'afwa fa'fu 'annee.): "O Allah You are The One Who pardons greatly, and loves to pardon, so pardon me". (Tirmithi and Ibn

Majah)

When is Lialatul-Qadr?

It is preferred to seek this night during the last ten odd nights of Ramadan, as the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* strove his best in seeking it during that time. Ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, said:

> *"Look for the Night of Qadr in the last ten nights of Ramadan,' on the night when nine or seven or five nights remain out of the last ten nights of Ramadan (i.e. 21, 23, 25, respectively)."* (Bukhari)

'Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: "Allah's Messenger used to practice I'itikaf in the last ten nights and say:

> 'Seek out Lailatul-Qadr in the (odd nights) of the last ten of Ramadan." (Bukhari and Muslim).

However if the servant is too weak or unable, then he should at least not let the last seven pass him by, due to what is reported from Ibn 'Umar, who said: Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Seek it in the last ten, and if one of you is too weak or unable then let him not allow that to make him miss the final seven.' (Bukhari and Muslim)*

It is known from the Sunnah, that knowledge of the exact night upon which Lailatul-Qadr falls was taken up because people argued, 'Ubaadah ibn as- Saamit, (may Allah be pleased with him), said: The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* came out intending to tell us about Lailatul-Qadr, however two men were arguing and

he said:

> "I come out to inform you about Lailatul-Qadr but so and so, and, so and so were arguing, so it was raised up, and perhaps that is better for you, so seek it on the (twenty) ninth and the (twenty) seventh and the (twenty) fifth.' (Bukhari).

Some of the ahadeeth indicate that Lailatul-Qadr is in the last ten nights, while others indicate that it is in the odd nights of the last ten, so the first are general and the second more specific particular, and the specific has to be given priority over the general. Other ahadeeth state that it is in the last seven and these are restricted by mention of one who is too weak or unable. So there is no confusion, all the ahadeeth agree and are not contradictory.

What are the signs of laylatul-Qadr?

Allah's Messenger, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him),* described the morning after Lailatul-Qadr, so that the Muslim may know which day it is. From Ubayy, (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: that he, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him),* said:

> "On the morning following Lailatui-Qadr the sun rises not having any rays, as if it were a brass dish, until it rises up." (Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmithi and Ibn Majah).

Abu Hurairah, (may Allah be pleased with him), said: "We were discussing Lailatul-Qadr in the presence of Allah's Messenger so he said:

> 'Which of you remembers [the night] when the moon arose and was like half a plate?... (Muslim).

Ibn 'Abbaas, (may Allah be pleased with him), said: Allah's Messenger, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "Lailatul-Qadr is calm and pleasant, neither hot nor cold, the sun arises on its morning being feeble and red." (Ibn Khuzaimah and al-Bazzaar)

11.6. Performing Umrah

The term Umrah means visiting Makkah during which one performs the Tawaf around the Kabah and the Sa'y between As-Safa and Al-Marwah. It should be performed with the intention of seeking Allah's Pleasure only and in accordance with the Prophet's legal ways. Allah the Most High said:

> *'And perform properly (i.e. all the ceremonies according to the ways of Prophet Muhammad), the Hajj and 'Umrah (i.e. the pilgrimage to Makkah) for Allah....'* (Surat Al-Baqarah:Verse 196)

We have been encouraged to perform Umrah due to its superiority in our religion. Allah the Most High said:

> *'Verily! As-Safâ and Al-Marwah (two mountains in Makkah) are of the Symbols of Allah. So it is not a sin on him who performs Hajj or 'Umrah to the House (the Ka'bah at Makkah) to perform the going (Tawâf) between them (As-Safâ and Al-Marwah). And whoever does good voluntarily, then verily, Allah is All-Recogniser, All-Knower'.* (Surat Al-Baqarah:Verse 158)

There are numerous Hadeeth in which the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* has stated the virtues of a person who

performs Umrah. Performing Umrah is expiation for sins. Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated, Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"The performance of Umrah is an expiation for the sins committed (between it and the previous one). And the reward of Al-Hajj Al-Mabrur (the one accepted by Allah) is nothing except Paradise".* (Al-Bukhari)

Umrah is considered one of the best deeds particularly when it is performed in the month of Ramadan. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "Umrah during Ramadan is equal to the performance of pilgrimage or equal to the performance of pilgrimage with me". (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

Our Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* has informed us that the supplication of a person who performs Umrah will surely be accepted. Narrated Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Those who make the pilgrimage for the Hajj or Umrah are the guests of Allah. The petitions they make will be granted and if they seek deliverance from sins their sins will be forgiven".* (Ibn-Majah)

Permissible Acts While Fasting

12. Permissible Acts While Fasting

(i.e. Actions which do not Nullify the Fast)

Allah the Most Merciful wishes ease for His slaves and not hardships. Therefore, He has allowed various things for the person who observes fast to perform and has promised no harm if they are practised.

12.1. Brushing the teeth.

It is permissible to brush the teeth particularly using branches of a certain tree (Siwak), which is even desirable during fasting.

12.2. Taking a bath or cooling oneself with water, air conditioning, etc.

Abu Bakr ibn 'Abdurrahman reported from a number of companions that they had seen Allah's Messenger pour water over his head while he was fasting due to thirst or extreme heat. (Ahmad and Abu Dawud). Similarly, one can submerge himself/herself in water or swim without invalidating the fast.

12.3. Washing the mouth or the nose with water.

There is no harm to wash the mouth with water without gargling or using mouth spray as long as it contains lawful ingredients. However, it is disliked to exagerate gargling of water into the mouth or the nose while performing ablution. Laqeet Ibn Habrah *(may Allah be pleased with him)* said O! Messenger of Allah tell me about ablution. Allah's messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Perform the ablution well. Clean the base of your fingers and sniff water into the nose but be careful when you are observing fast".* (At-Termithee)

12.4. Using perfumes

There is also no harm of applying perfumes on the head or the body during fasting.

12.5. Blood-letting or donation for medical purposes

It is permissible to have blood test or to donate blood without causing hardship. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> "The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* was cupped while he was in the state of Ihram, and also while he was observing a fast." (Bukhari)

Anas Ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked whether they disliked the cupping for a fasting person. He replied in the negative and said,

> "Only if it causes weakness." (Bukhari).

However, for blood donation it is better to delay until after sunset.

12.6. Taking injections or medicine containing no food

It is allowed to take injections which have no food value irrespective of their taste being felt in the mouth or not. Similarly, using mouth inhaler if necessary because it is neither food nor beverage substitute.

12.7. Tasting food on the condition that it does not reach the throat.

Ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> *"There is no harm for a person to taste vinegar or anything whilst he is fasting as long as it does not enter his throat".* (Bukhari)

12.8. Applying Kohl or eye-drop.

It is the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* to apply Kohl to his eyes. A number of the Prophet's companions used to apply Kohl while fasting, among them, Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) did not see any harm in use of Kohl for the fasting person. (Bukhari). Similar is wearing or smelling perfumes. Similarly, applying eye drops doe not invalidate fasting according to scholarly opinion.

12.9. Dental filing, extracting or scaling teeth.

It is permissible to have dental filing or teeth extraction during fasting, however, such a patient should avoid swallowing medicine or blood.

12.10. Kissing and embracing (wives) for one who has the ability to control desires.

This is indicated in the Hadeeth reported by Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her),

> "The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* would kiss and embrace (his wives) while he was fasting, for he had the most control of all of you over his desires" (Bukhari and Muslim).

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) asked the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*

> "Should one observing fast kiss (his wife)? The

Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said to him: Ask her (Ummu Salamah). She informed him that the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* did that, whereupon he said: Messenger of Allah, Allah pardoned you all your sins, the previous and the later ones. Upon this the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: By Allah, I am the most God-conscious among you and I fear Him most among you. (Muslim). However, young men or women are discouraged to kiss, fondle, touching skin to skin or to have foreplay while fasting as it may lead to loss of control. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abdullah Ibn `Amr Ibn al-`Aas (may Allah be pleased with him): "We were with the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* when a youth came and said: 'May I kiss (my wife) while I am fasting?' He the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: 'No'. Then an old man came and said: 'May I kiss (my wife) while I am fasting?' He said: 'Yes'. So we began looking at one another, so Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said: 'The old man is able to control his desires'. (Ahmad)

12.11. Swallowing things which are not possible to avoid.
There is no harm for the person who observes fast to swallow his/her saliva, the dust of the road, sifting flour, smoke and so on. All these unprotected things are all overlooked.

12.12. Having food in the mouth when Fajr is beginning.
It is recommended that when Fajr starts if a person has food in his mouth, he should finish eating.

12.13. Eating or drinking something unknowingly or being forced to do so.

If anyone, through forgetfulness, does something that would ordinarily break the fast, i.e. eat, drink, etc. his/her fast remains intact, provided he/she abandons the act as soon as one remembers that he/she is fasting.

Allah the Most Merciful says:

> *'... Our Lord! Punish us not if we forget or fall into error...'.* (Al- Baqarah,Verse: 286)

The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Allah has pardoned for my Ummah the mistake, forgetfulness and that which was done under compulsion".* (At-Tahawee, Ad-daraqutnee and others)

This is also indicated in the Hadeeth reported from Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Whoever forgets while he was fasting and eats or drinks let him complete his fast because Allah has fed him and given him to drink."* (Bukhari and Muslim)

12.14. Discharge of semen (as a result of thinking, or a wet dream).

Though this does not nullify the fast, it requires a bath. However, it is permissible for the fasting person to be Junub (having had intercourse or a wet dream) at the time of Fajr. Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) (the wife of the Prophet Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* narrated that AbuBakr

ibn AbdurRahman reported that Marwan sent him to Umm Salamah to ask whether a person should observe fast who is in a state of junaba and the dawn breaks upon him, whereupon she said that the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* (was at times) junub on account of intercourse and not due to sexual dream, and the dawn broke upon him, but he neither broke the fast nor recompensed. (Muslim)

12.15.Being sexually defiled at the time of Fajr.
It is permissible for the fasting person to be sexually defiled or having had intercourse or a wet dream at the time of Fajr. Though it is desirable to have a bath, a person who has any of the above sexual aspects can delay the bath till after Fajr time. This is indicated earlier in the Hadeeth narrated by Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her). (See 12.14)

12.16. Unintentional vomiting (vomiting by itself).
This is evident by the Prophet saying:

> *"Whoever has an attack of vomiting while he is fasting, then no atonement is required of him, but whoever vomits intentionally then let him fast another day in its place."* (Abu- Dawood, At-Tirmithee and others)

12.17. Bleeding by itself such as nose-bleeding or during extraction of tooth etc.
For heavy bleeding while fasting, which causes weaknesses, it is better to break the fast and compensate for it.

13. Those Permitted to Break the Fast

But who must pay a "fidyah" (ransom) for not fasting.

13.1. The elderly person

When elderly men or women reach an age that weakens them from fasting, they do not have to fast but are required to feed a needy person for every day in Ramadan for which he or she has missed fasting. Allah the Most High said:

> *"And as for those who can fast (with difficulty) they have (a choice either to fast or) to feed a poor person (for every day)." (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 184)*

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) recited the verse:

> *"And for those who can fast (but do not), there is a ransom": the feeding of a person in need"* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 185)

And said: "For the old man or woman who is unable to fast, he/she refrains from fasting and instead feeds a poor person with a saa` (a measure equal to four times the quantity held by two outstretched hands) of wheat. (Daraqutni). One year Anas Ibn Malik became too weak to fast so he prepared a large dish of Thareed (the quantity held the two outstretched hands) and invited thirty poor people who came and ate their fill. (Daraqutni)

Thus we can understand that the elderly men and women in poor health are permitted to break their fasts, as are the

chronically ill. Instead of fasting they are obliged to feed one poor person (miskin) a day (for every day of fasting that they do not perform). However, when elderly people reach the point of absent-mindedness and aimless talk, there will be no fast for them, nor will they be required to feed the needy for the days missed, because their case is like that of insanity.

13.2. Physical disability

When an old person is mentally sound but physically weak, and observation of the fast would further weaken his body, he/she does not have to fast but should feed a needy person for everyday missed. The aim of this religion is not to burden people to a point that they will be incapable physically of carrying out the duties enjoined by Allah. This is evident in Allah's words:

> 'So fear Allah as much as you can....' (At-Taghabun, Verse 16)

Allah the Most High also said:

> 'Allah burdens not a person beyond his scope...' *(Al-Baqarah, Verse 286)*

It is clearly evident that when fasting will result in the opposite of the intended outcome, namely causing danger to the sacredness of life, Islam gives room for the Muslims. Thus, it can be understood that when a Muslim is incapable of fasting due to the reasons mentioned above, feeding becomes a substitute.

14. Those Permitted to Break the Fast

But who must make up the days for not fasting

14.1. A traveller

It has been pointed out that a traveller has the option during a journey to fast or to compensate for it later on. This is clearly explained in many hadeeth:

It is reported from Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her) that Hamzah Ibn Amr Al Aslamee (may Allah be pleased with him) asked:

> "O Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. "*I am a person who fasts often, so should I fast while travelling?* Allah's Messenger replied: *Fast if you wish and refrain from fasting if you wish*". (Bukhari and Muslim).

Anas Ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> *"I travelled with the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) in Ramadan, and a fasting person would not criticise the one not fasting, nor the one not fasting criticise the fasting person"*. (Bukhari and Muslim).

However there is no disagreement amongst the scholars that: If fasting on a journey brings hardship upon a person, then it is better and more beloved to Allah that he breaks the fast. This is based on the hadeeth narrated by Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Messenger of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon*

him) saw a person in a shade. He asked about him. The companions replied that he was fasting. Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "It is not righteous that you fast on a journey". (Bukhari and Muslim).

But if fasting on a journey does not produce hardship for a person, then it is better to fast.

14.2. Women during period and in the post childbirth state

Fasting for women during the period of menstruation or of post childbirth state is forbidden and should be made up later, a day for a day. This is confirmed by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* who said:

> *"During her monthly cycle she neither pray's nor fast's"* (Bukhari).

Such a woman is considered like the sick, so she is permitted to break her fast and must compensate the days she missed afterwards. This is indicated in Allah's words:

> *'Observing Saum (fasts)] for a fixed number of days, but if any of you is ill or on a journey, the same number (should be made up) from other days....'*. (Al-Baqarah, Verse 184)

14.3. The Pregnant and breast-feeding women

If a pregnant woman or breast-feeding mother feels that fasting may endanger their life and harm the unborn or newly born, the Shari 'a gives them permission to break fast. They will have to make it up at any time after Ramadan. However according

to one opinion of scholars, they can break the fast and pay the fidyah (ransom). They do not have to make up the days missed. The Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) said to one of his companions:

> "Come, I shall inform you about the fast. Allah, the Blessed and Most High, remitted half the prayer for the traveller, and fasting for the pregnant and breast-feeding". (At-Tirmithi, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud and an-Nasa'I).

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say to his wives who were pregnant:

> "You are in the same situation as those who can fast [but do not]. You are to pay the "ransom" and, do not have to make up the days later." (Ad-Daraqutni)

14.4. A person having a sudden illness

When a person has a sudden illness and his prognosis indicates a serious condition, which when fasting causes harm or affects his/her health, he/she is granted permission to break the fast till recovery and should compensate for it. This is explained in the following verse in which Allah has allowed the sick person to refrain from fasting as a mercy for Him saying:

> *'.....So whoever of you sights (the crescent on the first night of) the month (of Ramadan i.e. is present at his home), he must fast that month, and whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number (of days which one did not fast must be compensated) from other days. Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you'.* (Al- Baqarah, Verse: 185)

An important note

If a sick person or a traveller fast and withstand the hardships of the fast, and continue to fast while feeling the hardship, their fast will be valid but disliked, for they did not accept the concession Allah gave them, thereby causing themselves much hardship and the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "Allah loves to give allowances just as He hates that you commit sins"

and in another narration

> "just as He loves to give His obligations" (Ibn Hibban).

He also said:

> "It is not righteousness to fast during a journey". (Bukhari and Muslim)

15. Actions which Nullify the Fast with Atonement (Qada)

Things, which invalidate fast, are of two kinds. The first one requires Qada (only making up missed days), the other one not only requires Qada but also Kaffarah (a penalty). The following are the things that require Qada only:

15.1. Deliberate vomiting

This is indicated in the saying of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*:

> *"Whoever has an attack of vomiting while he is fasting, then no atonement is required of him, but whoever vomits intentionally then let him fast another day in its place."* (Abu- Dawood, At-Tirmithee and others)

15.2. Bleeding of menstruation or after childbirth.

The beginning of menstruation or post-childbirth bleeding even in the last moment before sunset. It is reported from Abu Hurairah and Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"Is it not if she menstruates then she does not pray, nor fast?" We said: 'Yes indeed'. He said: 'Then that is the deficiency in her Deen.'"* (Muslim)

Such woman should fast for the rest of the day, and she must compensate that day after Ramadan.

15.3. Taking injections or drugs that are used instead of food.

Intentional intake of anything that has the same effect as eating or drinking invalidates the fast. For example, any injection that has nourishment in it and acts like food would break one's fast. Similar is the use of drips containing glucose. These injections are meant to give nourishment to the sick person.

15.4. Letting anything in the month intentionally.

The intake of any kind of food or drink that reaches the stomach invalidates the fast. Similarly, intentional intake of anything to the stomach whether beneficial or harmful such as a stone or a coin or a string etc. Nullifies the fast.

15.5. Ejaculation of sperm

Indulging in intentional execration of semen by masturbation or caressing or kissing or hugging etc nullifies the fast. It has also been stated by Muslim scholars that such a person needs a sincere repentance to Allah and asking for forgiveness and to make up the day(s) missed as well. If the fasting person knows that if he starts kissing his wife, he may not be able to control himself and it may lead to ejaculation, then it becomes unlawful for him to kiss her.

15.6. Breaking of fast under exceptional conditions

Muslims are permitted to break the fast of Ramadan when there is danger to their health or being forced to eat or drink, etc. The fasting person should not be acting against his free will. In this situation he/she should make up his/her fast later at any other time of the year.

Note:

Eating, drinking or having intercourse after dawn on the mistaken assumption that it is not dawn yet, would nullify fasting however, a person should complete the fast and compensate the day. Similarly, engaging in these acts before Maghrib on the mistaken assumption that it is already sunset.

Although, obviously it is better to hasten in compensating the missed Ramadan fasts than to delay them, it is not obligatory to compensate the missed days immediately afterwards. It could be delayed whether due to excuse or not, due to what is reported from Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her):

> *"It used to be that I had days to make up for Ramadan and I would not be able to do so except in Shaban"*. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Actions which Nullify the Fast with Expiation (Kafara)

16. Actions which Nullify the Fast with Expiation (Kafara)

Things that not only require Qada but also Kaffarah are the following:

16.1. Sexual interaction

There is no disagreement among Muslim scholars that having sexual intercourse during fast breaks the fast and it requires both an expiation and making up the day(s). Just like eating and drinking, Allah the Most High has forbidden sexual interaction during fast. He said:

> *'It is made lawful for you to have sexual relations with your wives on the night of As-Saum (the fasts). They are Lîbas [i.e. body cover, or screen, or Sakan, (i.e. you enjoy the pleasure of living with her), for you, and you are the same for them. Allah knows that you used to deceive yourselves, so He turned to you (accepted your repentance) and forgave you. So now have sexual relations with them and seek that which Allah has ordained for you (offspring), and eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the black thread (darkness of night), then complete your Saum (fast) till the nightfall. And do not have sexual relations with them (your wives) while you are in I'tikâf (i.e. confining oneself in a mosque for prayers and invocations leaving the worldly activities) in the mosques. These are the limits (set) by Allah, so approach them not. Thus does*

> *Allah make clear His Ayât (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, revelations, verses, laws, legal and illegal things, Allah's set limits, orders, etc.) to mankind that they may become Al-Muttaqûn (the pious)'.* (Al-Baqarah, Verse: 187)

The penalty of practising sexual intercourse while fasting is (a) to free a slave, if one is not able to do so then (b) to fast an additional period of 60 continuous days, if one is not able to do so then (c) he must feed sixty poor people-one average meal each. This is also indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), that a man came to the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and said:

> *"O Messenger of Allah I am destroyed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) asked 'And what has destroyed you?'. He said: 'I cohabited with my wife in Ramadan'. He said: "Are you able to free a slave?'. He said: 'No'. He said: 'Are you able to fast two months consecutively?'. He said: 'No'. He said: 'Are you able to feed sixty poor people?'. He said: 'No'. He said: 'Then sit'. So the man sat down. Then a large basket of palm leaves containing dates was brought to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and he said 'Give this in charity'. The man said 'There is no one between its two lava-plains poorer than us'. So the Prophet (peace be upon him) smiled until his molar teeth became visible and said: 'Take it and feed it to your family".* (Bukhari and Muslim).

So whoever breaks his/her fast with sexual intercourse then he/she must make up the fast with another day and also give expiation - no disagreement is known concerning this.

Note:

According to Abu Hanefa and Malik (may Allah be pleased with them) mathhab (school of thought) eating or drinking without clear excuse needs expiation. This is due to what is reported by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that a man came to the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and said:

> *"I broke fast a day in Ramadan deliberately. 'The Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) said: 'free a slave or fast two months consecutively or feed sixty poor people'".* (Malik)

However, according to other schools of thoughts eating or drinking deliberately while fasting nullifies the fast and it is actually considered as a sin, but the person needs only to make up and seek Allah's forgiveness.

Educating Children in Ramadan

17. Educating Children in Ramadan

Children (who have not reached puberty) are not commanded to fast. However, they are strongly encouraged to fast even a few days so that they get used to it and they grow up knowing the worship of fasting. In fact this was the practise of the first women of Islam who were living around the Prophet, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. An example of that is Ar-Rubayya' bint Mu'awiyyah who reported that: "The Messenger of Allah, *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, sent a man on the morning of the day of 'Ashurah, to the residences of the Ansar, saying:

> *"Whoever has spent the morning fasting is to complete his fast. Whoever has not spent this morning fasting should voluntary fast for the remainder of the day.' We fasted after that announcement, as did our young children. We would go to the mosque and make toys stuffed with cotton for them to play with. If one of them started crying due to hunger, we would give them a toy to play with until it was time to eat."* (Bukhari and Muslim.)

There are many ways to educate your children about Ramadan, the best and most important of which is to set the good example by fasting properly and behaving according to the Prophetic teachings. This is what your children will take from you first. When you are fulfilling this you can very easily [and they will accept it and practise it easily as well] teach them what you want. Here are few guidelines that you can use with your

children [you can think of others as well]:

1. Depending on their age encourage them to fast a number of days up to every other day or more for those who are almost at the age of puberty. For those who are still young let them fast a day or two.

2. Take your children to the Masjid for Maghrib prayer and break the fast with the larger Muslim community to make them feel the greatness of fasting and the unity of Muslims in worshipping Allah.

3. If your children cannot fast let them eat with you at the time of Maghrib and teach them that you are breaking the fast even if they ate before.

4. Teach your children the supplication of breaking the fast

5. Take your children to the Taraweeh prayer so that they get used it and know about it from an early age.

6. Teach them to recite the Qur'an regularly and inform them that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to do that in Ramadan.

7. Correct them if they misbehave or say unacceptable words and remind them that they are fasting and this may alter their reward.

8. Wake them up for Suhoor [even if they don't fast] and Fajr prayer.

9. Teach them to feed people who are fasting and tell them about

the reward for that.

10. Dress them in the best clothes, give them a bath and take them with you to the Eid Prayer. Teach them that this is our celebration. And remember that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"One who is given the responsibility of bringing up Duaghters and treats them well will be shielded from Hell.*
> (Bukhari and Muslim)

Zakatul-Fitr

18. Zakatul-Fitr

Allah the Most High and His Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* have made Zakat-ul-Fitr an obligatory charity for every Muslim, male or female. Every one has to pay Zakat-ul-Fitr, not only on behalf of himself but also on behalf of his family (i.e. the head of the family, by his own free will, can pay Zakat-ul-Fitr for each one of the members of his family including wife and children). This is indicated in the Hadeeth reported by Ibn 'Umar, (may Allah be pleased with him):

> *"Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) ordered Sadaqatul-Fitr on behalf of the young and the old, and the free and the slave - whom you provide for."* (ad-Daraqutni and al-Baihaqui)

The prescribed amount of Zakat-ul-Fitr of one person is only 1.75 Kilograms of wheat or its value in money (i.e. £ 2.50) approx. Zakat-ul-Fitr must be paid prior to the start of the **Eid-ul-Fitr** prayer. It can also be given anytime during the month of Ramadan and is often given early, so the recipient can utilize it for Eid purchases.

It is from the Mercy of Allah that He prescribed on us Zakat al-Fitr to get rid of the bad effect of vain and useless talks in Ramadan, as well as to feed the needy on the day of 'eid and make them happy on that day as well. Zakat al-Fitr has to be given in the form of food. That is the practice of the Messenger

of Allah *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* and the practice of the Prophet's companions. It also has to be given to the poor before Eid Prayer. Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that:

> *"The Messenger of Allah, (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) enjoined Zakat al-Fitr on the one who fasts to shield one's self from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the poor. It is accepted as zakah for the person who pays it before the `Eid Salah, and it is a mere sadaqah for one who pays it after the Salah"* (Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah)

19. Eid Prayer and Eid Celebration

Eid prayer and Eid celebration will be discussed from Islamic perspective. It covers a number of valuable issues related to the concept of the term Eid, Eid prayer and includes various other important matters interrelated to manners of Eid celebration, which every Muslim must know. The discussion of these great events in Islam has been supported by proofs from the Holy Book (The Qur'an) and the Sunnah (Legal ways) of the Prophet Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*.

19.1. Definition of Eid

Human history has known festivals from the earliest days of man on earth. Ancient Egyptians had one called the day of adornment in which temples and streets were decorated and people were on holiday. It was during one such festival that Prophet Musa *(Peace be upon him)* defeated the magicians of Pharaoh and his officers. In Surat Taha verse 59, Allah the Most High said:

> '*Musa said: "Your appointed meeting is the day of the festival, and let the people assemble when the sun has risen (forenoon)*'

The term Eid occurs in the Holy Qur'an once meaning a joyous frequent occasion. This comes about when the disciples requested Iesa *(Jesus)*, son of Maryam (Mary) (Peace be upon him and his mother) to pray to Allah to send to them a table from heaven so that they can eat and satisfy their hearts with the truth. The words of prayer are mentioned in Surat Al-Ma'idah, 114:

'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said: "O Allah, our Lord! Send us from heaven a table spread (with food) that there may be for us - for the first and the last of us - a festival and a sign from You; and provide us sustenance, for You are the Best of sustainers.

In Islam the term Eid denotes the festivals of Muslims. Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) told Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him):

"For every nation there is a feast and this is our feast". (Al-Bukhari).

To Muslims, Eid is a day of thanksgiving and gratefulness to Allah who guides them to Islam. There are only two annual festivals of Islam recognized by the Shari'ah (Islamic laws and regulations). The first is **Eid-ul-Fitr**: the great festival that follows the month of Ramadan when the fast is broken. Muslims all over the world celebrate this Eid on the first day of Shawwal, the 10th month of the Islamic calendar and the first of the three months named as 'Ashhur al-Hajj' (i.e. the months of Pilgrimage). The other being **Eid-ul-Adha,** which comes on the 10th day of Thul Hijjah, the 12th month of Islamic calendar. The two Eids have been defined by Allah's Messenger as Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

"Eid-ul-Fitr is the day on which the people break the fast and Eid-ul-Adha is the day they offer sacrifice" (At-Tirmidhi)

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that upon arriving in Madinah, the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* found its

people celebrating two days. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> *"When I came upon you, you had two days that you continued to celebrate from the Jaahiliyyah; indeed Allah has substituted them for you with what is better: the day of Sacrifice and the day of Fitr (breaking the fast)"*. (Ahmad and Abu Dawood)

Fasting is forbidden on these days, as **Eid-ul-Fitr** marks the end of the month long fast of Ramadan and **Eid-ul-Adha** marks the days of eating when Muslims sacrifice suitable animal(s), in memorial of Ibrahim's *(Peace be upon him)* act of obedience to Allah. Abu Ubaida (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that: 'I witnessed the Eid with Umar bin Al-Khatab (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

> *"Allah's Messenger (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) has forbidden people to fast on the day on which you break fast (the fast of Ramadan: Eid-ul-Fitr) and the day on which you eat the meat of your sacrifice (Eid-ul-Adha)"* (Al-Bukhari)

Eid-ul-Fitr is a spiritual celebration designed by the Shari'ah as a sign of gratefulness by the Muslims on the accomplishment of Ramadan, and as an immediate reward by Allah for the believers who spent the month of Ramadan in fasting and performing other forms of worship. Allah the Most High said:

> *'....Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Allah [i.e. to say Takbir (Allahu-Akbar; Allah is the Most Great) on seeing the crescent of the months of Ramadan and Shawwal] for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him'.*

(Al-Baqarah,Verse: 185)

Muslims celebrate the Eid by offering special prayers and wishing peace and forgiveness to every one. Islam has adopted a unique graceful approach to celebrate the Eid. This will be described as follows:

19.2. The Night Preceding the Eid: What to do on Eid Night?

It had been the practise of the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* that he would perform voluntary prayers, Dhikr and Dua on the night preceding Eid prayer. Therefore, it is desirable to practise as much acts of worship as one can in the night preceding the Eid and should pray for all his/her needs and desires.

19.3. Preparation for Eid prayer (Salatul Eid)

The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* has prescribed for us specific practices to be performed in the morning of Eid day before proceeding to the Eid prayers: these can be summed up as follows:

- Waking up early in the morning, making Ghusl (taking a bath), cutting nails, performing Wudu and establishing Fajr prayer in the Mosque,

- Dressing in the best available clothes, new if possible. It has been narrated that "The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to wear his best clothes for the Eid prayers and he *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* had clothes that he reserved for the two Eids and Jumu'ah" (Muslim),

- Wearing a sweet-smelling liquid (e.g. Misk). It has been reported that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon*

him) used to apply the best perfume he could find for the two Eids.

- Eating an odd number of dates or a light sweet snack. Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* would not leave his house on the day of Fitr until he ate some dates" (Al-Bukhari).

- Reciting Takbir after Fajr prayer and while going to the Mosque or the place of Salah and until the start of the Eid prayer. This is a sign of glorification and worship to Allah. Men are recommended to say the Takbir loudly, however, women should say it silently. The Code for Takbir is:

  Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar La illaha illa llah Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar Wa lillahil hamd.

  Allah is the Greatest, Allah is the Greatest. None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and Allah is greatest. Allah is the Greatest and all praise is to Allah.

19.4. Going out to the place of prayer

The prayer of the two Eids is an obligatory act essentially to be performed by each Muslim. We have been informed that the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* performed it consistently and commanded all Muslims (men, women, children) to go out for it. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Umair bin Anas bin Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) that some men came riding and testified that they had seen the new moon the previous day. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* therefore commanded the people to break the fast and go out

to their place of prayer in the morning". (Ahmad and Abu Dawud).

The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* even specifically commanded all of the women, the virgins and the menstruating to attend instructing the latter to refrain from praying, in order for all of them to witness this good and the Muslims' supplications. He *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to take his wives and Duaghters to the two Eids. Umm Atiyah (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> "We were ordered to go out with the single and menstruating women to the two Eids in order to witness the good and the supplications of the Muslims. The menstruating women though would stay away from the prayer area" (Al-Bukhari & Muslim).

The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* further commanded the woman who did not own a jilbaab (outer overall garment for women) to borrow her friend's (Al-Bukhari).We have been informed that after Eid prayer the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to go to the women, preaching and reminding them. This is indicated in the Hadeeth narrated by Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him):

> "I went out with the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* on the day of breaking the fast or of the sacrifice, and he prayed and gave a Khutbah, and then he went to the women and admonished them; reminded them of Allah, and ordered them to give charity". (Al-Bukhari).

For Eid prayer the following rules must be remembered and taken into consideration:

- Eid prayer can be performed any time between sunrise and noon. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

  "The time of the Eid prayer is after the sun has reached the height of a spear and until noon. It is recommended to delay ul –Fitr prayer to enable the people to give out their Sadaqah (zakat ul-Fitr)" (Muslim),

- Eid prayer has neither Adhan nor Iqamah. Ibn Abbaas and Jabir (may Allah be pleased with them) said:

  "Adhaan was never given (for Eid prayer) on the day of Fitr nor the day of Adha" (Al-Bukhari),

- It is not advisable to hold Eid prayer in every mosque; rather it is preferable that the people from several mosques get together to either perform it in an open area (known as the musalla) or in a big mosque, which can accommodate a large number of people. The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* used to pray outdoors in a different location than his daily prayers. Consequently it is preferred to pray outdoors, if possible.

- No Sunnah Salah may precede or follow Eid prayer. It has been reported by Ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him),

  "The Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* went out of his house on the day of Fitr, prayed two Rakat, and did not pray before or after it" (Al-Bukhari),

- Eid prayer has two Rakat. Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said that

  "The travellers' prayer is two Rakat, the Adha prayer is two Rakat, the Fitr prayer is two Rakat and the Jumu'ah prayer is two Rakat. This is their full length as came upon the tongue of Muhammad *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*. (Ahmad)

19.5. How to perform Eid prayer:
Eid prayer should be performed as the normal Salah, with the only addition of six takbirs, three of them in the beginning of the first rakah after the Imam recitingTakbiratul Ehram (Allahu Akbar) and three of them just before ruku in the second rakah. Other Imams (Rahmatullahi Alyhim) have some other ways to perform it.They recite Takbir twelve times: seven in the first Rakah and five in the second. All ways are based on the practice of the Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him).

We have been told to raise our hands up to the ears, and reciting the takbir in a low voice then to bring the hands down and leave them earthwards. After the third takbir, we should fold them as we do in the normal Salah. After these three takbirs the Imam recites Qur'an and performs the first rakah as the normal Salah. After rising for the second Rakah, the Imam begins recitation from the Qur'an, and then he recites three takbirs once again before bowing down for ruku. At each takbir the Muqtadis recite the same after the Imam then he recites takbir for bowing down into the ruku position. The rest of the prayer is performed in the usual way as the normal Salah.

Note:

- If Eid day occurs on Friday, then Friday Salah (prayer) is no longer an obligation upon those who performed Eid prayer. Zaid ibn Arqam (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that

  "Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* prayed Eid's Salah and then he gave an exemption concerning the Friday prayer, saying: 'whoever wishes to perform Friday may do so'. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

  However Friday prayer becomes obligatory upon those who were not able to attend the Eid prayer. Those who attend Eid prayer and do not attend Friday prayer, it suffices for them to perform Salat of Adhur.

- If one misses Eid prayer with the congregation he/she may pray two rak'at performing the same procedures as the Imam does.

19.6. Khutbahul -Eid: The Address of Eid

The Khutbah (The Address of the Eid) is a Sunnah Mu'kkadah as the Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) always performed it and he advised his companions to stay and listen to the Khutbah in perfect peace and silence. It has been agreed that there are two Khutbah for the Eid and the Imam sits between them (i.e. like Friday Khutbah). Khutbah should be delivered after the prayer of Eid. Ibn Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

> "I attended the Eid with Allah's Messenger *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)*, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman all of them would pray before the Khutbah"

(Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

The Khutbah normally starts with the praises of Allah then it is recommended that the Imam recite Takbir (i.e. Allahu Akbar nine times and with seven times in the second Khutbah). It is also advised that during the Khutbah, the Imam should admonish, advise, remind the people of Allah and urge them to perform good deeds and abstain from evil ones.

19.7. After Eid prayer

It is permissible for Muslims to rejoice and enjoy the Eid by giving presents, eating, playing and recreation as long as they stay within the acceptable bounds of Islam Narrated Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her)

> "Abu Bakr entered upon us on the Eid day and there were some slave girls who were singing. Abu Bakr said: 'Slaves of Allah, you play the pipes of the Shaytan (Satan) in the presence of Allah's Messenger'. The Prophet said to him: 'O Abu Bakr! Leave them, every people have a festival and this is our festival" (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

It is also desirable to shake hands, hugging and congratulating one another on the days of Eid. It has been narrated that when the Prophet's companions met each other on the Eid day, they would say to each other "May Allah accept from us and from you" (Ahmad). Muslims use many phrases in various languages to congratulate one another for the completion of the obligation of fasting and the 'Eid-ul-Fitr festival.

It is recommended to give the chance for the children a chance to celebrate the Eid by performing decent acts and enjoying the Eid by going to the Eid prayer and the khutbah also by visiting

the relatives and doing more acts of charity etc. Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) said that

> "Eid is a day of happiness for those whose fasts and prayers have been accepted by Allah.

He (may Allah be pleased with him) has also said:

> "Eid is the day in which one must commit no sins".

Muslims sometimes spend extravagantly during the Eid. This is an impermissible act in the sight of Allah who said:

> *'And give to the kindred his due and to the Miskîn (poor) and to the wayfarer. But spend not wastefully (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift Verily, spendthrifts are brothers of the Shayateen (devils), and the Shaitân (Devil Satan) is ever ungrateful to his Lord'*. (Al-Isra, Verse: 26-27)

It is from the Sunnah of the Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) to take different routes to and from the Eid prayer. Jaber (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

> "on the days of Eid, the Prophet (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) would go to the prayer area by one route and come back by another route" (Al-Bukhari).

19.8. During the Month of Shawwal (the 10th month in the Islamic calendar)

We have been advised by the Prophet *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* to keep six fasts in the month of Shawwal. He *(Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him)* said:

> "Whoever completes the fasts of Ramadan then adds to them the fast of six days in the month of Shawwal, it will carry the reward of fasting for the whole year". (Muslim).

These six days of fasting could be performed at any day of the month of Shawwal. However, it is more preferable to start them in the second day of Shawwal. Therefore, we should take this opportunity of acquiring such an enormous reward from Allah the Most High.

20. Conclusion

We have been promised that the past sins will be forgiven for those whose fast is based on belief (Iman), sincerity and Ihtisaab (i.e. truly expecting the reward from Allah). We have have been promised that the past sins will be forgiven for those who offer night prayers (Qiyaam) during the whole month, and who do that with the same two conditions of Iman and Ihtisaab. We have further been told that there is one night in this month which is better (in rewards) than a thousand months of worship, and that all the past sins will be forgiven for those who spend it offering Qiyaam with both Iman and Ihtisaab. We have been told that the devils will be chained down, that the gates of Hell will all be shut and that the gates of Paradise will all be open throughout this month. We have been told that Allah answers the du'aa of the fasting person at his iftaar (fast-breaking). We have been told that the fasting person will be joyous and happy when he meets his Lord.

We all hope and pray to our Lord to be among those who offer the fast in the right way, in order to cultivate its glorious fruits. We hope to be granted forgiveness of our previous sins, to be able to do much more good and to overcome all our weaknesses. We pray to Allah that He makes us among His 'utaqaa' (freed people from Hell) in this month and that He prevents our bodies, our skins, our flesh and our bones from Hell Fire. He is the Most Merciful, the Most Beneficent, the Oft-Forgiving. Let us pray for the betterment of the Muslim society at large and for

the youth in particular, and that Allah strengthens and helps us to acquire knowledge. O Allah! Bless us in the day of our Eid and let it be the best day that has passed over us. O Allah! Benefit us with what You have taught us and teach us what is beneficial for us and increase our knowledge. O Allah! Let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us on the right path, Ameen.

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